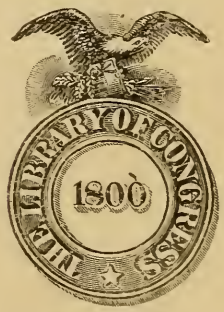
CHRIST'S EXPERIENCE OF GOD

FRANK H. DECKER



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MINISTER OF THE CHURCH HOUSE
PROVIDENCE, R. I.

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TO MY WIFE

INTRODUCTION

I know Frank Decker. It is a privilege to know him, but I can hardly call it a distinction. I am only one of several thousand millionaires and ministers and mulligans, of Pharisees and first citizens and tramps, of sinners and publicans and outcasts of various sorts who have the right to stand up in the streets of Providence at his side and say "I know you." Anybody can know Decker, provided, of course, that he is in trouble or need. If he has no troubles he may have to wait outside a while until Decker gets through. They that are well need no physician but they that are sick.

Many men write lives of Jesus—how many you never know until you look at the book catalogues. But Decker has lived a life of Jesus first and written it afterwards: and that, as you will agree I think, is something entirely different.

You have heard the phrase, the "heart of a

city," by which is generally meant the city's center, the spot where the street cars are thickest and the noise and dust are worst. The city of Providence has a real heart. It is Decker's Church House, which stands down-town in the center of things on an almost respectable street, its door wide open to everyone. It's the business of a good, hard-working heart to center in itself all the sympathy and love of the organism; and the Church House has pretty nearly succeeded in doing that for Providence. Drop into the current of the city's traffic anywhere a lonely human being in search of help and he may drift about for a time, but before night he will have found Decker; you may be sure of that. The first policeman he speaks to will direct him, or the first conductor or fruit peddler. And Decker, who may have seen a hundred or two just like him already, will have the same big smile for him and will help to do up his bundle of worry and pack it away with the thousand and one similar bundles that have been left at the Church House and never called for.

It was ten years or more ago that Decker

—by the way, his name is Rev. Frank H.— began to work out the idea of his Church House. He was pastor of a Congregational church in Providence at the time, and happy with his job, but not altogether satisfied. It struck him that he was only partly doing the things that Jesus of Nazareth had done. Jesus, for instance, took care of the sick. Decker had no facilities or opportunity for that. Jesus had made his home with the poor and given them the help they needed. He had been a sort of First Aid to everybody who needed him in the cities where he went. Especially his fondness was for the publicans and sinners. Decker envied him those publicans and sinners more than anything else. Somehow he couldn't seem to get at enough of them through his regular church work to make any showing at all. It made him restless; he wanted to put himself in a place where he could have a chance to do all the things that Jesus had done, where he could really touch every needy life in the city with the spirit of real active love. He wanted to show that love works.

It wasn't to be a united charities organization, nor a social settlement, nor any religious work with the religion left out. Decker had watched the efforts of such organizations for years, and while he sympathized with them, he found them wanting. In his Bible reading he is a revised versionist. That is, he thinks that when Paul wrote "the greatest of these is charity," he really meant "love." He has an idea that if John had intended to say, "God so card indexed the world," or "God so analyzed the case of the world," or "God so investigated the world," instead of "God so loved the world," it would have been printed that way. So he opened up a couple of rooms in an inadequate sort of a house and let it be known that any one who needed help of any sort, or comfort or sympathy, could come around to him and be loved. That was the idea—charity vitalized and made everlastingly effective by love. He didn't have much money for furnishings, and among the things which he was careful not to spend any of his money on were card catalogues and files and record-books in which to count up the number of his cases.

A half-dozen times every day Decker gets his opportunity to demonstrate that there is a real difference between charity and love; that what the world needs is not so much ham sandwiches as the bread of life; that Jesus with $50,000,000 and an organization behind him couldn't have done as much as Jesus who was never too busy to love.

It took Providence some time to catch the vision of what Decker was doing and planning, but after that he had plenty of help. In his office in the new building now he's really at the center of a web of helpfulness that reaches out to almost every agency in the city. The police are for him; let a man come to them in trouble and they turn him over to Decker. If his trouble is a legal one, Decker passes him on to one of half a dozen lawyers who give their services free to the Church House. If it's sickness, there are some of the biggest physicians in the city who have offered him their service at any time. If it's a case for the city hospital or the poor-farm or the infirmaries, the officers of all of them know Decker and are ready to lend a hand. If it's

food that's required, Decker knows where to get it. If it's a job, there are a dozen big manufacturers who have offered to take any skilled labor that Decker sends to them; unskilled labor he employs himself in doing the thousand and one odd jobs about the homes of the Church House's friends and supporters.

That's one particularly interesting thing about the Church House, that it co-ordinates all the various helpful agencies of the city. It gives opportunity for service to all kinds of people who really want to do something to help, but haven't the time to hunt up their own opportunity. From the four corners of the city folks who need help are poured in upon Decker, and he puts new hearts in them and new hats on them and turns them over to other folks who are ready and willing to give help.

The other interesting thing about the Church House is that its work is three-quarters self-supporting. The beds and the meals yield a certain revenue, and the men and women who have found new life and hope through Decker come back to reimburse him

out of their first earnings for the money which the Church House has invested in them.

His is a gruelling day and night task. Just simply to sit back in a chair and receive a hundred men and women a day, to say to each one, "Now, I like you, and we'll see what can be done in your case"—that may be easy enough. But it is not the way Decker does it. He stands all day long in a current of men and women who drift against him with the full force of their dead weight, and all day long he is striving with every atom of will power and heart power that is in him to turn them around, to resurrect their dead spirits, to set them fighting their way back against the current. Jesus, who did the same sort of work, was conscious that power had been drained out of him even when a woman touched the hem of his garment on the street. Decker, at the close of some of his days of unremitting contacts, is about as limp and tired out as a man can be.

But he's proving that love really works. When he had to lock a man up in the city prison the other night he told the poor fellow,

even as he closed the door on him, that it was an act of love. And apparently there must have been something in his voice that rang true, because a grimy hand was pushed out through the bars to take his, and the man inside said, "Thank you, Mr. Decker." Things like that please Decker. They are the recompense that he gets for the long, tired, trying days. They are his encouragement to go on with the job of being the heart of a city, of making Providence worthy of its name.

It is because I have seen him live that I have wanted to read what he writes. Other lives of Jesus may have been written by men with more degrees after their names, but I venture that none of them carried a higher degree of devotion to Him in their hearts. None of them, I know, have had more publicans and sinners as their friends, have sought with more soul exhausting earnestness to seek and to save that which was lost.

BRUCE BARTON.

FOREWORD

There are many false types of Christianity in the world, as Jesus predicted there would be, and it is of vital importance that their errors be pointed out, that men may not be deceived by them. They may be known by their fruit. So Jesus declared. "Men do not gather figs from thorns." No more can the fruits of genuine Christianity be found connected with any of its perversions. The true Christian life can be lived only by one who has the true Christian religion. The Christian character can be grown only in Christian soil. What now we wish to do is to make clear the vital connection between Christ's faith and his character, which was the fruit of that faith. Jesus reduced his faith to practice. He lived his faith to the full. He trusted it implicitly. It was his meat and his drink. Take away the faith of Christ, and there is nothing significant about the life of Christ. His character was the fruit of his faith, and he declares

that that faith will produce the same character in everyone who holds it; that that faith will transform every believer into his image, and so into the image of God. The same tree will always bear the same fruit. The real faith of Christ will always enable one to live the life of Christ. We cannot believe what he believed without developing such a character as he developed.

That the character of Christ is above all other characters known on earth is conceded by all those who know him, even by those who do not wholly accept his teaching or believe in the reality of his personal experience of God. The secret of that life does not seem, however, to have been clearly revealed to all who call themselves Christians. Many Christians think of Jesus as the Son of God in a unique way, and therefore regard his character as a unique creation. It does not seem to them to have been developed as other characters are. Perhaps this is the reason that so little real effort has been made to understand how such a character was developed. No greater question can be considered than that of the secret of Jesus,

how it was that he was able to develop a character that has commanded the worship of men wherever it has been known, and must yet compel every knee to bow before it.

Some lives of Christ have been written in which his faith and religious experience do not figure at all. As well write a life of Darwin without mentioning evolution or of Marconi without mentioning electricity. The chief significance in the life of Jesus is found in the religion he taught and which he claimed to have experienced. When we come to ask precisely what the religion of Jesus Christ was, which is the only true Christianity, there arises a babel of contradictory voices bewildering the mind of the sincere inquirer.

There is no doubt that Jesus claimed that he enjoyed a personal experience of God. He was sure of the presence of Another with whom he was in direct touch and whom he recognized as his Father. He felt His touch and heard His voice. Jesus did not think of himself as the Father, or as a part of the Father, in any such sense that the Father was not another personality. His Father was not

his higher self, but another self. There were two wills, his and God's. The God of Jesus was entirely personal. He was another individual. Jesus was in the Father and the Father in him, only as he prayed that other men might be one in God and God in them. The God of Jesus was a Spirit, but a personal Spirit, and the Father of all spirits.

Jesus believed that he experienced God. He was conscious of his personal union with Him. That was his religion. I am not arguing for the reality of such an experience, but simply insisting that the fact be recognized that Jesus claimed it for himself. His experience of God was intimate and enduring, more intimate than his experience of his nearest friends. God was more real to him than his mother. He came nearer to God than to those earthly companions with whom he was most closely associated. He spent whole nights in communion with God; and would often go apart early in the morning to meet Him before he would consent to meet others. Jesus needed no man to help him to realize the presence of God. "I am alone," he said, "and yet

I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

"Why cannot I follow thee now?" Peter asked his Lord. All the other disciples and friends of Jesus might have asked the same question, for not one of them was able to follow him in his holy life of love. Their failure was wholly due to the fact that as yet they were without their Master's experience of God. The Holy Spirit had not yet come into union with them. They therefore did not understand God's will concerning Jesus, as he understood it. They could not follow him, because they savored not of the things of God, as they are known only by those who are in the Kingdom of God, that is, in personal union with God. They did not share their Lord's aim to be perfect as his Father in Heaven is perfect. How could they follow him? They did not have their Lord's motive, how could they either understand or continue with him? Without his aim, motive or method, Christ's most loyal friends were forced into denial of him, even when they were ready to lay down their lives for his sake.

And here is revealed the secret of the failure of many now to develop in the character of Christ. As I have said, that character is the unique fruit of Christ's religion, of his personal fellowship with God. Only as one shares Christ's aim, motive, and experience of God, is one a true Christian. Only so can one have that fellowship with Christ and God by which one's sins are overcome and one is transformed with Christ into the image of God. A true Christian is one who shares Christ's experience of God; is one whose faith in the righteousness and love of God rests upon his personal, spiritual union with God. There are many whose supposed experience of God does not commend itself by the character it has developed. Judged by its fruit it is to be avoided rather than desired. Some men, seeking union with God, have become fanatical and insane; while the so-called spiritual experiences of others have not resulted in purifying their lives. These men have not sought God with Christ's conception of Him, or with his motive for seeking Him. They have desired union with Him for selfish reasons and not in order

that they might be qualified for larger usefulness in ministering to the world. No experience of God can prove beneficial to men except as they seek to share its fruit with others. Our debt to Christ for showing us the way to a true experience of God, with its fruit of a perfectly God-like character, is immeasurable. His service in showing us how to find God is the highest service that a man can ever render another. He has done this; he found and revealed the way to God. This is what he considered to be his great mission in the world, and he succeeded in fulfilling this mission. It thrills one's soul to write these words. Jesus of Nazareth found the only possible way to God for himself and for the world; and at the expense of suffering and death he has forever revealed it to the world. What his experience of God on earth was, and the way he entered into it, we shall now humbly seek to make plain to all who shall read the pages of this book.

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I

THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Matthew 13:44-46.

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Matthew 13:33.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage.

Matthew 22:2-4.

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST

The Kingdom of God is the religion of Jesus Christ which he experienced and preached and which finally he commanded his disciples to preach to every creature in all the world. "And it came to pass that Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" "And He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God." "Go thou, and preach the Kingdom of God," is the command of Jesus to His disciples. They were to limit all their religious teaching to the one subject of the Kingdom. In doing so they were to follow the example of their Master, who considered that his sole mission in the world was to experience and teach the Kingdom of God. It is the only message that Christ has given to the world for its salvation. So important did he regard its proclamation that when one said unto him,

"Lord, suffer me first to go bury my father," Jesus replied; "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God." And when another said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell, which are at home in my house," Jesus said to him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

What is this Kingdom? "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." *It is a personal relationship.* "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom should come, he answered them and said, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, lo, there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." It is fellowship with God, for which man was prepared from the foundation of the world, when God made him out of Himself. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25: 34.)

Because God the Father and Man his son are of the same nature, both divine, the Kingdom relationship between them is possible. Jesus had this in mind, when he said, "Glorify Me with Thyself, with the glory which I had with Thee, before the world was." No one who believes in a personal God to whom man is vitally related, will question the possibility of such a relationship as the Kingdom of God. Those who deny the possibility of such a fellowship, must be prepared to deny the existence of a personal God. This Kingdom is a spiritual relationship, in which God's spirit bears witness with man's spirit. It is a direct relationship between man and God, in which no one comes between them, not even Christ himself. "Call no man father," Jesus said, meaning that no one but God should be thought of in that sacred relationship. And again, he said, "When you seek your Father, enter your closet, and close the door, so that you and He will be absolutely alone." Exclude everyone from that sacred relationship, and come directly to God as a son comes to his father. You are not to come to Him

through another who is in union with Him, but immediately, and alone. It is a relationship of two, not three, of Father and son, with no one between them. It is only in such a relationship that a man is in the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the vital thing in religion. Through it only, God fulfills His perfect purpose in the lives of men. It is the one chosen instrument in his hand for that purpose. It is, therefore, like the net, with which the fisherman catches his fish; like the good seed, by which the husbandman makes beautiful and fruitful his ground; like the leaven, with which the woman transforms her meal into wholesome bread. It is Christ's way of salvation for man, other than which there can be none.

This relationship is a treasure, a hidden treasure. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking

goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Notice that the treasure of each parable is the seeker for the treasure of the other. In one case, man is the treasure, in the other, God. Taken together, the two parables represent God and man as seeking each other. These two, God and man, are the great treasures of the universe, each needing the other for his completion, neither being sufficient in himself. Apart from fellowship with God, man is valueless, there is no purpose in his existence, he would better not have been born. Apart from man, God's very existence would have no value. Very strikingly Christ emphasizes these facts in these companion parables where man is finding his value in God, and God is finding His value in man. It is only in this Kingdom that man's infinite worth is discovered and revealed, for man's value is recognized only as he is seen in his relationship to a perfect and eternal God. As the treasure of the acorn is seen only in its relationship to the oak, so the treasure in man is

seen only as he is recognized as a son of God, having in him all the possibilities of God's perfection. When one thus regards man as an embodiment of God, who has put not a little of Himself, but all of Himself, into him, and has given Himself to all the ministries involved in developing and perfecting His child, then one sees that man is a treasure of infinite value.

This Kingdom of God is also a regenerating relationship. "Another parable spake He unto them, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." Union with God is the one natural and only possible condition of transformation into the image of God. God is the Leaven which must be in hidden, spiritual touch with man if man is to be regenerated and perfected. Personal fellowship with God leavens man. Such union enables God to give Himself increasingly to man until man is filled with all of His fullness. "Marvel not," Jesus said to Nicodemus, "that I said unto you you must be born from above."

One cannot explain the mystery of this divine union, any more than one can explain the mysteries of other fellowships; but one may be sure of the Kingdom because it is an experience and not a theory, by the fruit of which it may be known. There is no possibility of perfecting man's soul except as God dwells in him, as leaven dwells in meal. This is what Jesus means by the parable that we are considering: God must be in man, in union with his innermost soul. No faith or worship will change man into the image of God that does not result in this union of God and man, such as leaven has with the meal that it transforms. What a type of the religion of Jesus Christ as he experienced and taught it, is given us in the parable of the leaven and the meal. This, too, is the religion of Christ as St. Paul taught it when he said that he had his eye on "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," by which he meant that he realized that God must be in him as He was in Jesus Christ, if he was to attain to the perfect righteousness of God, as Christ attained it. God must be in us as He was in Christ if we, like

Christ, are to be perfected, as God is perfect. Let us understand this fact which has been so strangely obscured in the Christian Church. Our union with God must be exactly the same as Christ's. It must be as personal as his was, and all that it meant to him it must mean to us; otherwise our union with God will never do for us what union with God did for Christ. The relationship must be the same to us if its fruit is to be the same in us. Those who make Christ's fellowship with his Father unique and peculiar take away for all others all hope of sharing its blessed fruit. Indeed they divest Christ of all power to save others. Jesus declared that his Kingdom was open to all men, that all might enjoy his relationship to the Heavenly Father. This was his Gospel, his good news of the Kingdom of God, a personal relationship of the soul to God, such as he enjoyed. If such fellowship with God as Christ had is open to all men, then all men must be divine as he was divine; must be of the God substance as fully as he was, though not at first in the same degree. All men may unite with God as Christ united with Him

because all, with him, are sons of God. There is no difference between the nature of one child of God and that of all other children of God, except in degree. Human nature, apart from sin, is the divine nature, as the drop of water is the ocean and the tallow dip is the sun. The Holy Spirit and man's spirit can blend since one is the Father of the other. The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven and meal because the Kingdom of Heaven is the union of God and man. God leavens man through fellowship with Himself, transforming him into His own perfect likeness as He imparts to him the riches of His own nature.

The Kingdom is a growing relationship, in which all the divine possibilities of man are called forth, developed, perfected.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground: and should sleep, and rise night and day and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

"For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

"But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

"He knoweth not how"—how union of seed and soil results in the development of the seed into all that the plant is from which it came, or how union of any imperfect man with a perfect God perfects man as God is perfect. But we have seen both of these things done—have seen the soil transform the seed into the plant and have seen fellowship with God transform a man (Christ) into the perfect likeness of God.

This growing and perfecting experience of God the least of men may have, since the least is a son of God. This is what Jesus means when he says the Kingdom of Heaven is like the least of seeds which when grown is greatest of all herbs. Glorious truth, that the least of men has in him all the possibilities of the perfect God.

"And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

"It is like a grain of mustard seed, which,

when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it."

Why does he choose the mustard seed rather than any other? Because it has greater possibilities of development than any other and thus is well fitted to illustrate the vast possibilities of development in the nature of man under the growing relationship of the Kingdom.

It is, also, the only relationship which satisfies the spiritual hunger and thirst of man. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said "The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come to the marriage feast."

The Kingdom of God is like a king's banquet. It is a glorious truth that the consciousness of the indwelling presence of God is the richest feast that the soul ever tastes. The table of the Lord satisfies the hunger of man as nothing else can. Union with God makes it impossible for a man to feel the depression of hopeless loneliness. The soul that is in touch with God delights itself with fatness. Paul, speaking of his experience of God, said, "I have all things because I have Him, even now when I have nothing else." That man who is in conscious union with God has in that union the greatest satisfaction that the soul ever knows.

By giving Himself to us, God gives us the banquet of the Kingdom of Heaven. This Kingdom, only, satisfies the cravings of man's soul. It is the only bread of which if a man eats he shall not perish but shall have everlasting life. It is the only water concerning which it can be said, "He that drinketh of it shall never thirst." It is the only friendship that fully satisfies the soul's hunger. For one hungers for a friendship that shall be perfect,

that shall be ever available, that shall be ever developing, that shall meet every requirement of the soul in all its moods; and only in God is such a fellowship spiritually realized. In all other unions, precious as they may be, there is something lacking. They are at best temporal. They are available only at intervals. They are defective in certain important respects so that they never fully satisfy the cravings of the human soul. We crave union with One who shall be with us all the days and who shall fulfill our every need. There is only one fellowship that perfectly meets the hunger and thirst of man: the fellowship of the Kingdom of God, which is as a well of water, always springing up in the human soul unto eternal life. Millions of men testify to this fact; they are never alone, because their great Friend is with them, since He is in them.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, eternal life, and Christ, are synonyms for this Kingdom. They all have exactly the same meaning, the spiritual, personal relationship of God and man as Father and Son. The term *Christ,* with its Hebrew equivalent *Messiah,*

signifies one in conscious touch with God. A mistake is made by those who imagine that this Christhood of Jesus relates to his divine nature, for nothing is more clearly stated in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament than this, that the Messiah, or Christ, is one who is in personal relationship with God. The king or prophet upon whose head the sanctifying oil had been poured, signifying that he was in touch with God, was a Messianic king or prophet. Because God gave the Hebrews water through a rock, that rock is called Christ. When any man enters the Kingdom relationship of God, he becomes a Christ, and it would be just as proper to add that term to his name as it was to add it to the name of Jesus. Eternal life is to know God. "And this is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The knowledge of God here referred to, is not a theory, but an experience. It is to know Him as He only can be known by one who lives with Him in the relationship of the Kingdom of God.

II

THE FRUITS OF THE UNION

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 6: 33.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
Meekness, temperance.

Galatians 5: 22-23.

Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11: 28-30.

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.
And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.
And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Matthew 17: 1-8.

CHAPTER II

THE FRUITS OF THE UNION

What are the fruits of the union with God? Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control." The first of these fruits is love, such love as is never found in man except as he is in the Kingdom relationship to God.

The fruits of the Spirit are the fruits of the union of God and man. This union, while it does not at first perfect man, does mark the beginning of the mighty change in him that is to go on until he is perfected. God enters into union with man for that purpose. That is His aim in seeking union with man, and that must be man's aim for himself, in seeking union with God. The immediate effect of this union is exceeding great. Man plus God is very different from man minus God. The least in

the Kingdom of God is greater than the greatest outside that Kingdom.

Man in the Kingdom of God is greater than all others outside that relationship, first, in love for God. The fruit of union with God is such love for God as is never found outside of that union. Only those who have the Spirit of God know God and love Him, for the love of God is shed abroad in the human soul by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible that love for God should dwell in any man in whose heart God does not dwell, for no one knows God except as he has experience of God. If we know Him, so that we love Him, it is because He dwells in us. This Kingdom of God that fills our hearts with love for Him is not such knowledge of Him as comes from without, but from within. The only God a man can love is the God whom he finds in his own soul. There is no God outside whom he can respect or reverence or love. If he does not love the God that is in his own soul he will never love any God, for the only God that is righteous is the God that is in a man's own soul, bearing witness to his spirit. This is the

God that Jesus loved, as he increasingly experienced Him through his union with Him.

God as we see Him in nature and as we judge Him in man does not call forth our full love. The God of nature rather repels us by His seeming unrighteousness and brutal cruelty. The God in human history as we see Him is anything but sufficient to fill our hearts with supreme affection. But the God with whom a man comes in contact in the spiritual experience of Him is one whom he can supremely love. When He is come into a man's soul He convinces man of His righteousness and of His truth and of His love. The man who dwells in God loves God as no other can. I repeat that he who is least in the spiritual Kingdom knows more of God than the greatest outside that sacred relationship. The only lovable God is the God whose Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of every one who surrenders himself to Him. To all such God manifests Himself as He does not to the world.

The secret of the Lord is only with those who know Him through an experience of

Him. He interprets to them the mystery of His Providences, so as to justify them in their faith in His supreme righteousness. I repeat, only those who are in personal union with God love Him, for they only know Him. The only man of our race who never doubted God is the man who had most of the spirit of God in His own soul: Jesus, in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt without measure, had measureless love for God and measureless faith in God's righteousness. My own experience confirms the truth I am teaching in this chapter, for I have never so loved God as when I have been conscious of my union with Him and of the wonderful fruit of that union. Oh, the unspeakable gratitude and love of one who is conscious of the indwelling presence of God, and who realizes what that presence is meaning to him! How one's whole soul goes forth in love to God when one feels the spirit of God working within him, transforming him into the image of God; when one has the witness of his sonship to God as he only has who is conscious of his union with God; when one beholds "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon him that he should be called a son of God!" As the spirit of God in a man's soul convinces him of his sin and reveals to him increasingly the perfect righteousness of God, with the assurance of his own final transformation into all of its fullness, his soul goes forth to God with a supreme affection. How unspeakably grateful one is for the light of God's presence and for the power that one finds in union with Him. The fruit of the spirit is love for the spirit; the experience of God is that alone which fills the soul with love for God. How luminous those words now are: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by His spirit." Only the experience of God reveals to man the character of God, His righteousness, His truth, His love.

"I have declared Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me, may be in them," Jesus said. His new name for God is Father. He was the first to realize the full meaning of that name, and to declare it to the world; and, for a time, he was the Only Begotten Son of God, i. e., the only one who realized this most intimate rela-

tionship. It was his consciousness of his sonship that led Him always in speaking of God to address Him as Father. "O Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." "Father, Lord of heaven and earth." "Our Father." It was because of his faith in God as his Father, in whom he existed before the world was, and of whom he was a part, that Jesus entered into his love for God. It was through this channel that the love of God was shed abroad in his life, as he beheld what manner of love the Father had bestowed upon him, that he should be called a Son of God. Believing as he did that God had put all of Himself into him, as a tree puts all of itself into a seed,—and had prepared for him the fullest development of all His divine possibility, Jesus realized that God had loved him as Himself.

Another fruit of this union, as Christ experienced it, is divine love for man, who is recognized as a brother, since he is also a son of God. When one looks upon men in this light, he sees their infinite value, and where one's treasure is, there will his heart be, also. It is

impossible that men should love one another as Christ loved men, unless they see, as Christ saw, that men are sons of God. When Jesus loved men as he realized God loved him, he gave himself wholly to them. It was impossible for him, regarding God as Father of men, to love Him without loving them. Outside this Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ's love for God and man is absolutely impossible. It is a fruit of that union, apart from which it can never exist.

The love of Jesus Christ for men was God's love for them, with which the spirit of God in his soul filled him. It was a fruit of Christ's union with God. It is a type and degree of love for man that is never found except in the soul of a man who is in union with God. It was God in Christ that led Christ to so love men as to give himself to them and for them that they might not perish. It was not Christ's belief, merely, that all men were his brothers, that filled his heart with love for them; it was the uncreated, unmerited love of God for them, with which union with God filled Christ's soul. It was the love of God for men,

shed abroad in the heart of Christ by the Spirit of God. Jesus knew this, knew that his love for men was God's love for them. He knew that he went forth to save men because his Father sent him. He knew that all good works he did were done because they were inspired by the loving God dwelling in him. He said, "There is none good but God. The works that I do and the words that I speak are given me by Him whose spirit dwells in my soul."

Coordinate with the fruit of love is that of truth. The Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Truth. There is no variableness, or shadow of turning, in our Heavenly Father. "Let me be true, though every man be a liar." There is no darkness of falsehood in Him. Union with Him, therefore, brings to the soul a growing vision of truth. "And when He is come, He will lead you into all truth," our Lord said.

As men yield themselves to God, making His law supreme, they are freed from all those things that blind them to truth. Their attitude toward God becomes their attitude

toward truth. Their body is full of light because their eye is single. They see truth because their hearts are pure. Guided by the inner light, men see error as they could not otherwise see it and are led into truth as they could not otherwise find it. Men write and speak truth as they are moved by the Spirit of God. The clearness of their spiritual vision is determined by the completeness of their union with God. He is never able to reveal all of His truth to any man, but increasingly He enlightens men concerning His purposes of love. Jesus declares that one who is guided by the Holy Spirit shall have the light of life.

Another fruit of this union is righteousness. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Union with God results in the revelation to man of God's righteousness. What the sun is to the eye, God is to the conscience. Without vital union with Him conception of His righteousness is as impossible as is vision of the world to the man whose eye is not related to the

light. Blindness to the righteousness of God is inevitable in the case of every man who is not like Jesus Christ, in the Kingdom relationship to God. Nature cannot reveal the righteousness of God, since nature is as yet imperfect. Neither can man make that revelation, since his righteousness, at best, is incomplete. But the fruit of conscious relationship to God is that His righteousness is manifested to His son. One of the surest evidences of the presence of God is a quickened conscience.

The righteousness of God is the righteousness of love, and the righteousness of truth. So Jesus Christ taught. No righteousness that is not of truth and love is the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. Nothing is righteous as God is righteous, except it be true. Men do not gather figs of brambles; no more can they gather righteousness from error, or from hate. In these days, when falsehood is supposed, in many cases, to promote righteousness, it is wise to emphasize the fact, "Let your communications be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: *for whatsoever is more than these*

cometh of evil." While the vision of God's righteousness, and power to fulfill it, can come only to those who are in the Kingdom relationship to Him, it is nevertheless necessary that one confirm his conception of God's righteousness by the double test of love and truth.

Another fruit of the Kingdom of God is power, superhuman power, the power of God which comes to man through his union with Him, enabling him to accomplish works otherwise absolutely beyond him. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." "For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." "Take my yoke upon you," Jesus said, "and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." His yoke represents the union of two, God and man, which makes man's heaviest burden light. "Give us this day, our daily bread;" the strength of union with Thee in that Kingdom, and we shall not be overcome by temptation, but shall be delivered from evil. When we

are weak (in ourselves alone), then are we strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Strength for all the work God has given us to do, in overcoming the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in fulfilling all the sacred obligations of our life as children of His, comes daily to us as we abide in union with Him.

The Kingdom relationship to God is the rock upon which the Church of Christ must rest if it is to permanently endure. That is the only foundation that Christ has laid, or that can be laid, for his people to rest upon. In it only can they hope to find sufficient strength to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, the devil. That rock is not Peter, but Peter's experience, direct and immediate, of the presence of God. Only as men share that experience are they members of the true Church, and, as such, entitled to the assurance, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee." It is only in the power of that relationship that the evils of the world are overcome, the man's eternal, spiritual interests secured.

Peace is also a fruit of this Kingdom union with God, peace of conscience through the pardon of all one's sins, to which pardon the answer of a good conscience toward God and man bears witness; the peace that comes only to one who is conscious of union with God in whose care he knows his every interest is secure; the peace that passes the understanding of all who do not know its secret, which is the presence, power and confidence that God is in union with him so that he need fear no evil; the peace of Christ which the world can neither give nor take away, but which dwells in the breast of every one who is conscious of the presence within him of the eternal God, and who can therefore say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He restoreth my soul, Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." Oh, the peace the man has who has God dwelling in him! In that union man finds all that goes to make up pure joy: love, harmony, beauty, strength, righteousness, truth, peace.

Another fruit of the union is joy; a type of joy that can only exist where this union obtains. It is the "joy of heaven to earth come down;" the joy of one's conscious sonship to God, and of daily fellowship with Him; the joy of the experience of His love, and of love for men who bear His name; the joy of service to God in the highest and holiest ministries of His love; the joy of giving joy to those in sorrow; the joy of declaring the good news of the Kingdom of joy; the joy of saving men from sin; the joy of anticipation of the world of joy. Words cannot express the type of joy of the experience of this highest, and holiest, and happiest of all the relationships of the universe and of sharing all with others. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus indicates what a man may expect to find when he enters into union with God, his Father.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have

sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

A few days before his death Jesus gave his disciples a single glimpse of what the Kingdom of God meant to him. "There are some standing here," he said, "who shall not taste death till they see the Kingdom of God." "And after eight days he taketh Peter, James and John with him and was transfigured before them." It was of that experience that Peter declared, speaking of the event long afterward, that he and James and John saw the glory of his Master. It was when Jesus was transfigured, by his consciousness of the presence of God on the Mount, that his three disciples had a single glimpse of his fellowship with God, which he always speaks of as the Kingdom of God. It was the only occasion

on which Jesus permitted men to see him in prayer; at all other times when he prayed he entered into his closet and closed the door. From his nearest disciples he withdrew a sufficient distance when he prayed, so that they should not see him when he was most conscious of the presence of God. But he made a single exception, and as he prayed his countenance expressed the glory of the experience of God that filled his whole soul. To the three onlooking disciples the very clothes of Jesus seemed changed by his close experience of God, and his countenance shone like the sun as it reflected the glory of that intimate experience of the presence of the Heavenly Father. Remember that this transfiguration scene is a scene of the Kingdom of God as Jesus experienced it, on this earth and while he was in the flesh. It is therefore such an experience of God as any man may have who follows Christ into the Divine presence, and experiences God as the result of the surrender of his will to him. I am sure that God will come as near to us as He came to Christ when we surrender our wills to Him as fully as Christ did. If any

man would see what the Kingdom of God meant to Christ let him see Jesus in that Kingdom on the Mount of Transfiguration. Then God was so real to Jesus that his very face was like the sun. And notice the glorious fact that in that hour of Christ's experience of God he was also conscious of the presence of those who were with God. Moses and Elias were with Him and Jesus was as sure of their presence as he was of God's presence; they were as real to him as God was. If this be true, then one who dwells with God in the relationship of His Kingdom, may have communion not only with Him but with others who are with Him, both in this world and also in that which is beyond the veil of death. Experience of the presence of God should mean also experience of the presence of spirits of just men made perfect with Him after death.

III

THE DOOR OF THE KINGDOM

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

John 10:1-10.

CHAPTER III

THE DOOR OF THE KINGDOM

Our Lord found in his day that those who were supposed to be guides to the Kingdom were blind to its very existence. "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." He had these same leaders of his church in mind, when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold (Kingdom of God), but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

Jesus means here that everyone who seeks to come to God in any other way than his way is by that very fact proved to be seeking Him from a wrong motive. A selfish motive for seeking God will always blind one to the true way to Him. It was because the Jewish leaders were not willing to pay the price of obedi-

ence to God that they sought a less expensive way to Him. They wanted to steal into His favor by a sacrifice less costly than that of their sinful lusts; therefore they blindly offered God the blood of bulls and beasts and birds in place of the surrender of their wills; but they could not thus steal into fellowship with Him; all their efforts to come to God in a way other than Christ's proved fruitless, as all such efforts must always prove. Still multitudes of those who bear the name of Christ are trying to climb up into the presence of God in some other way than Christ's. They are not willing to narrow their lives to the extent they must in order to make them straight, for it does narrow one's way in many respects to make it straight,—narrows one's speech and conduct. It gradually contracts one's life to make it conform to the will of God, which is always the will of righteousness, truth and love; but such narrowing is most desirable since nothing that is wide at the expense of being crooked can be of any possible profit. Only through Christ's straight door can one enter into fellowship with God.

Jesus declares that few there be that find the way and the gate by which a soul may enter into union with God. "Strive," he said, "to enter in at the straight gate, for many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able to." Few there be that find it—how sadly true these words are today, of the multitudes that seek a personal experience of God; how few ever find it as Christ enjoyed it. How few experience God in His Kingdom relationship. Few there be that find God because few there be that seek Him where Christ said He might be found. The fault is not with God; He does not hide Himself from men; He is more willing to give His spirit than parents are to give good gifts to their children. God hungers for fellowship with every one of His children more than any one of them hungers for fellowship with Him,—He cannot be content with ninety-nine per cent. of His sheep, but must needs seek till He finds the hundredth, also. He is like the woman who sought her tenth piece of silver till she found it. God is always seeking union with man; always ready to give His Holy Spirit to him.

Every one who truly follows Christ will be led by him into the presence of God. Whoever seeks God as he sought Him will find Him as he found Him; whoever asks the Spirit, as he asked, will have the Spirit given him; whoever knocks at the door of the Kingdom as he knocked will find it opening to him; whoever comes to God as Christ came will in no wise be cast out; whoever fulfills the conditions of fellowship with God as Jesus fulfilled them will realize the presence of God as Jesus realized it. There is no other way to God than that by which Christ came to Him. There is no other Name but his by which one can ask and receive the Spirit of God. But asking in his name is asking as he asked; coming in his name is coming as he came. It was the great mission of Christ to experience God and so reveal the way to Him.

Here we have to be most careful. Many seek entrance into the Kingdom of God in vain. Jesus does not seem to fulfill his promise of serving as a door through which men may pass into the conscious presence of the

Heavenly Father. Many who have attempted through Christ to find God confess that they have utterly failed in their quest; that all of their years of following Christ have not resulted in their being led into the conscious presence of God; Jesus has not proved to be for them the way to the Father, the door into His Kingdom. They do not deny the reality of the religious experience of Jesus, or of others who claim through him to have found God. They account for their own spiritual failure on the ground that they are non-religiously gifted. In their judgment the spiritual experience of Jesus is not available to all men, but only to those who are spiritually gifted. This is not the teaching of Jesus, however, but the contrary, for he offers the Kingdom of God to every man upon the same condition. His religion is available to all who are in a condition to fulfill its requirements, as all may who are willing to pay the price of obedience to God.

What is Christ's way to God? Upon what conditions may one have Christ's religious experience? His way is as natural as that by

a door into a house. What if a man were to seek the presence of the sun, without its light and heat? Equally fruitless is every effort that man makes to realize the presence of God while he does not desire and pray for all that that presence must bring of righteousness, truth and love. Prayer for these is prayer for Him. To desire them is to desire Him. Any desire for God that does not mean desire for what He is can never open the door into His presence. For God gives His spirit to profit withal. Oh, the depth of meaning in this word! He comes only to those who are prepared to receive His light, His truth, His love. Many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, that they may make God minister to their lusts. Christ found God because he sought in God what God is. What was Jesus' motive for seeking fellowship with his Father? Jesus loved God because he loved righteousness and truth and love. Because he loved these with all his heart he loved God supremely, since he believed that God supremely embodied them all. No one can have Christ's reason for seeking fellowship with

God who does not share Christ's conception of God.

Christ sought union with God that he might become like God. "Glorify me that I may glorify thee." No man is seeking God where Christ found Him if he is not seeking God with Christ's conception of Him and for Christ's reasons for seeking union with Him. Let me make this very clear. Have you ever sought God where Christ found Him and where he declares He may be found of every man? Yes,—and you did not find Him there! You must have mistaken the place. Consider very carefully where Christ experienced God, namely where his whole will was surrendered to the will of God. That is what baptism meant to Jesus, and that is why in connection with his baptism he is said to have had experience of God both as to His touch and His voice. Baptism was the sign of Christ's supreme consecration of himself to his Father, the consecration not of the servant to the master, but of the son to the Father. When St. Paul found disciples of Christ who had not heard of a spiritual experience like Christ's

he immediately inquired of them concerning their baptism, feeling sure that their baptism could not have meant to them what Christ's baptism meant to him, since it had not resulted in bringing them to God. The apostle found that his suspicion was true, namely that their baptism had not symbolized the consecration of themselves to the will of God. He therefore insisted that they be baptized again with such baptism as Christ had experienced, and when they did this they found themselves in the consciousness of the presence of God. The form of baptism matters not, but what is symbolized represents the full surrender of the soul to God, and this is the one condition of fellowship with Him.

Because of His wealth of love, God has offered Himself to every one of His children. In a beautiful passage of Scripture, He is represented as running to meet a repentant child of His. It is the only case in which God is seen running, and His haste is that He may be united with a son in the Kingdom relationship.

Very clearly Jesus pointed out the way

into the Kingdom, to a certain scribe. "And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

That man who understands that he is to love God and man is on the threshold of the Kingdom of God. All he needs to do to enter, is to consecrate himself to the obedience of his faith. Reader, thou art not far from union with God, if thou art about to seek that union, not in forms and dogmas of religion, but in the practice of holy love. Thou art at the door of the Kingdom; thou hast but to knock with the hand of obedience and it will open to thee.

IV

THE PERILS OF THE UNION

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Matthew 4:1-11.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERILS OF THE UNION

But this life of union with God is not without certain perils which must be considered. The Kingdom of God is a growing kingdom. In this respect it is like seed sown in a field. For man is a seed of God, and the Kingdom of relationship is the only soil in which he can develop. We have seen how this union is effected,—what the condition of entrance into it is. We have now to consider how it may be maintained, until it shall have completed its perfect work in the heart of man.

This union is subject to the peril of interruption. Many things may mar it. First, there is the peril of misconception of God's will, by which Jesus was confronted immediately after his consecration of himself to do his Father's will. It was not a question with him then as to his purpose to obey God; his aim in that direction was fixed. But immedi-

ately he experienced great difficulty in discovering what that will was.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and was with the wild beasts; and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city, and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and, on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and he said unto him, All these things

will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

The figure that represents our Lord's experiences, in seeking knowledge of the will of God, is very striking. A wilderness, with wild beasts, exactly represents it. For there were on every hand perils of error as to what God willed concerning him, perils which must utterly destroy him if he were overcome by them. These came to him out of what he had been taught to regard as the will of God, out of what his Church taught and what his Bible taught. He was tempted to believe in miracles wrought in violation of nature's laws. He was tempted to believe in the necessity for using wrong means to secure good ends. All through his life he was exposed to this peril of misconception of the will of God, and against this temptation he prayed, up to the very last.

Mankind has always been exposed to this

danger. In seeking what they have supposed to be the will of God, men have sacrificed on His altar their children and their cattle; they have wrecked their reason, ruined their homes, desolated their lives; they have found themselves in a wilderness, full of ravenous beasts. He who will consider what the Bible teaches in some of its parts, and what men have imagined to be the will of God, will see clearly that the figure of a desolate wilderness, filled with ravenous beasts, is a fitting illustration of the perils to which every man is exposed who is sincerely consecrated to do the will of his Heavenly Father. Jesus was saved from this peril by his refusing to believe that it was God's will that he should violate any law of nature or of conscience. Light concerning the will of God came to him through his aim and motive. Nothing that contradicted either, would he believe to be the will of God. Aiming at perfection for himself and for others, he was protected as he could not otherwise have been, from mistakes concerning the will of God.

And Christ is the way for us to know the

will of the Heavenly Father. He believed that God only could reveal His will to him; therefore he sought knowledge of that will in prayer. The Spirit of God gave him guidance as the Spirit quickened his sense of righteousness and so gave him clearer vision of God's will, for he knew that God never willed any unrighteous thing, under any circumstances. His conception of God as absolute righteousness guarded him from all misconceptions of the will of God by which unrighteous men have been deceived. He knew that what was not right was not of God. He saw clearly what the will of God was, because he had a clear conception of the righteousness of God, as the result of his experience of the Spirit of God. All around him were those whose teaching concerning God's will reflected upon God's love and truth. Jesus knew that nothing that men did that contradicted either was of God. He would not accept as a word of God, any word that contradicted the Spirit of God. He therefore set aside many of the traditions of the Church of his day.

In the moral world Jesus had clear guid-

ance as to the will of God in his conception and experience of God as righteousness, truth and love, for he knew that nothing that his Bible taught or that men taught in his day concerning the will of God was true unless it was confirmed by love and truth and righteousness. He did not believe that it was the will of God that exceptions be made to any of the laws of God. They were all wisely ordained and it was necessary that their uniformity be maintained in order that God's love and righteousness be not violated. Jesus would not make an exception for himself that he would not make for all others similarly circumstanced. He repelled the idea that because he was Son of God he was free from the necessity of obeying the laws of God. He would not believe that God willed that he get his bread in any less costly way than others got theirs; nor that a miracle would be wrought for his protection from death that would not be wrought for all others in like peril. He had no idea that God's love for him was so special that God would give him help that others could not have. He was

indeed tempted to believe that he would be compelled to depend upon the devil for help to fulfill His wishes. We are told that the devil said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." When it seemed that a righteous end could not be had by righteous means, since no miracle was to be expected to secure it, then the thought came to Jesus that it might be the will of God that he use evil means to win good results. That was a most dangerous and subtle temptation. It was one of the wild beasts by which Jesus' soul and mission were imperilled and by which both must have been destroyed, had he yielded. Oh, the whole world seems to have yielded to this horrible delusion that it may be the will of God that one bow the knee to Satan to win the world to God! One great Protestant nation has boldly declared that she is doing the very will of God while she is employing the most cruelly unjust means to secure what she claims are right ends. She could not trust God for success for a right cause if she had not bowed her knee to the use of a wrong means. "It is God's

will that we do evil that good may come. It is necessary that we wrong the innocent to punish the guilty. It is the will of God that we trample the sacred rights of others under our feet in a good cause."

Jesus Christ was not deceived by this plea as it came to him increasingly throughout his whole life. His faith in the righteousness of God was such as to protect him fully from it; he would not believe that it was ever the will of God that anyone, under any circumstances, or for any reason, practice any falsehood or unrighteousness. He did not believe that right ends are secured by wrong means; that men gather figs of thorns, or that God is ever under necessity of consenting to a lesser evil in order to prevent a greater one. Jesus Christ would not believe that a righteous God is ever moved by an unrighteous motive or method or thought; therefore he escaped all those misconceptions of God's will by which others were deluded because the God they worshiped was not holy. Never has the world seen a man so fully tested as Christ was in his faith in the righteousness of God. He,

more than all others, had reason to doubt the final triumph of righteousness through the sole use of righteous means, for he saw evil in its most fearful power facing righteousness in its great feebleness, but his faith in God did not falter. "Every plant," he cried, "which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." And, again, in the very day in which he was to be crucified he had such magnificent confidence in the ultimate triumph of the righteousness of God as enabled him to declare, "I will yet draw all men unto me." And, oh! marvel of marvels, Jesus of Nazareth believed that the very efforts men were making to defeat righteousness would result in enthroning it. He believed that God would cause that the unholy means by which they were seeking to defeat His will would result in its fulfilment. His sublime faith in the righteousness of God, of which he had a witness in his own soul in the presence of the Spirit of God, enabled him to escape all the temptations that appealed to him to pervert the will of God. In a word, I repeat that Jesus knew the will of God because he knew

the character of God, which he knew because he was filled with the Spirit of God. Only as we share his spiritual experience of God shall we have any hope whatever of discerning the will of God as he discerned it.

V

THE PERILS OF DISOBEDIENCE

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Matthew 13: 18-23.

CHAPTER V

THE PERILS OF DISOBEDIENCE

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The perils of the growing Kingdom of God are enforced again in the Parables of the Sower, and of the Tares of the Field. In these related Parables Jesus strikingly illustrates why men fail to enter the Kingdom, or, why, having entered, they do not remain therein.

The seed that fell by the wayside and was caught away by the birds represents those who hear the word of the Kingdom of God, but do not accept it. They fail to accept it, Jesus declares, because they do not understand what the Kingdom is. They make light of it as they could not do if they knew it to be a relationship with God, through which alone their souls can be transformed into His perfect image. No one who knows what fellowship with God means,—that love for Him and man, that righteousness, peace, power, joy,

and rest,—can possibly fail to covet it above all other things, to prize it so highly as to count it cheap at any cost. No one who knows the value of such a treasure will permit it to be caught away from him; or having entered into that fellowship will give it in exchange for anything in the world. Nothing but blindness to its beauty and its perfecting power can account for the failure of men to enter instantly and gratefully into its experience.

"Then cometh the evil one, to catch it away." It is the evil in men that blinds them to the treasure of the Kingdom, and so prevents them from accepting it. It is man's desire to remain in evil thinking and practice, that keeps him from entering into that fellowship with God which demands that he turn away from all these. Very striking is the reason that Jesus gives for men's failures to enter into his Kingdom, as he declares that the evil one is responsible. This man who hears but does not receive the Kingdom of God, represents all those whose ears are not open to its appeals, whose hearts do not respond to its meaning, and who, therefore,

utterly fail to enter into its rich experiences. Would that they might see what they are losing in their ignorant rejection of the Kingdom of God!

Then there are those who receive seed in stony places. These are they who hear the word of the Kingdom, and at once, for joy, enter therein. But their fellowship with God is quickly subject to interruption through disobedience to His will; for, whenever disobedience occurs, the growth of the Kingdom is arrested. It matters not whether the violation of God's will is through ignorance or wilfulness, the same result follows, and the child of God is conscious of an embarrassment in his relationship to his Heavenly Father. It is well this is the case, as such interruptions warn men to seek and remove their causes. It is in this way that men are convinced of their imperfections and sins, since these manifest themselves through the interruptions of fellowship with God which they invariably cause.

Often a man is conscious that he is out of harmony with God, but does not recognize the discordant note. He sees that the plant is

withering, but, as yet, knows not the reason. He feels that a cloud has come between him and the sun, not because he, as yet, sees the cloud, but because the light is obscured. This Kingdom relationship is educational. Through it only does God reveal His will to man, whom He perfects by removing all that prevents its growth. For all that interferes with the growth of the Kingdom of God, also prevents the development of the man who is in that sacred relationship. Both the Kingdom and the children of the Kingdom grow together. Whatever fault or imperfection there is in man mars the relationship; and it is as man realizes that the relationship is marred that he is led to seek and find the thing in himself which has marred it. And so he is perfected through his fellowship with God as he perfects that relationship by the removal from himself of all that it discloses of his imperfections and sins.

Nothing is more certain than this, that what rich soil is to a seed, fellowship with God is to man, that as only the soil has power to call forth from the seed the hidden plant, so

only spiritual, personal fellowship with God has power to reveal and correct men's imperfections. As a man succeeds daily in maintaining his fellowship with God and in removing everything that mars it, as such things are disclosed to him, he goes on in the perfecting of himself and his relationship with his perfect Father in Heaven; and at last the Scripture is fulfilled which predicts that when every evil is removed, the man who is in this fellowship will shine as the sun in the Kingdom of his Father.

The one condition, therefore, that must be fulfilled by every one who would be perfected in soul, is continuous obedience to God, through which, alone, fellowship with Him can be maintained. The seed that fell on stony ground represents those who enter into fellowship with God without counting the cost of maintaining that fellowship through practice of obedience to the will of God. Jesus very significantly says concerning these men that "anon, for joy, they receive the word of the Kingdom of God." By that statement he means, not that they have gladly entered into

fellowship with God through the door of obedience, with full determination to keep that door forever opened, but that they have sought the Kingdom *solely because of the joy that they thought they would find therein.* "For joy" they entered the Kingdom. But when they found that in connection with the joy of the Kingdom there was suffering and persecution, which they had not anticipated, and which they were not prepared to experience, their faith withered and died as the seed growing in surface soil is shriveled by the burning sun. These men would not suffer for righteousness' sake. They would not bear witness to truth when fidelity to truth meant persecution. They would not love, when to love was costly. They wanted the joy of the Lord without his experience of suffering and death. They wanted his crown, but not his cross. These men are the seed that fell on the stony ground. How many there are like them! In vain do all such persons enter the Kingdom of God. Fruitless are all their efforts to secure its reward without paying the price of the practice of righteousness, truth and love.

The seed choked with the thorns represents those who enter into the relationship with God, and continue to abide therein until they find that fellowship with Him involves contradiction of their worldly lusts and selfish ambitions.

Jesus saw clearly that the love of money would make it impossible for some men to dwell in the Kingdom of God. "It is easier," he said, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Nothing so surely blinds one to the will of God as the love of money. Nothing more surely holds men back from the practice of God's holy law of love than this selfish love. It is one of the deadliest foes of fellowship with God. Many of those who bear the name of Christ have permitted their love of money to kill their love for man and so their union with God. Men who are not fulfilling the law of righteousness and love in their money-getting and money-spending cannot maintain the fellowship of the Kingdom.

It is impossible also, that one should do the will of God without coming into collision with

those who do it not. Persecution must follow in the relationships of life in which we are placed; one's loyalty to God must be most severely tested by the opposition to Him which is sure to develop. Persecution will arise because of the word, or will, of God. So it was with Christ, who was hated by selfish men in proportion as he was loyal to God. Doing the will of God in His Kingdom meant that Jesus was unable to do the will of his friends, his mother, his disciples; his foes were of his own household, as well as those without. No one was in fellowship with him in his religious life except those who shared his purpose to do the will of God. Persecution of him arose on every side because of the word of God which he preached and by which he lived. One who is not willing to suffer for righteousness' sake need not hope to remain in fellowship with the righteous God, for it is impossible that one's union with God should continue after one has refused to practise obedience to the will of God, even at the expense of persecution from those who are opposed to that will.

The good seed on the thorny ground is said to have been choked by the thorns, by which Jesus means that a man's union with God must be vital, if he is to maintain it at the expense of enduring all the persecution that will come upon him because of his loyalty to the will of God. No man will ever be called to suffer more because of his obedience to God, to righteousness, truth and love, than Jesus suffered; but, alas, how many surrender the will of God to the will of those with whom they are connected, rather than lose their human fellowship. How few care enough for fellowship with God to maintain it at the expense of loss of fellowship with unspiritual men. When it becomes clear to them that they cannot worship God and mammon, that obedience to the will of God must be fulfilled in their money getting, their money spending, their human relationships, and in all the things of their material life, their obedience ceases, and they pass out of the Kingdom relationship with their Heavenly Father. The thorns choke the good seed. In the very moment of their disobedience of God's laws, their spirit-

ual life ends. But it is doubtful whether these men realize this sad truth. The chances are that they continue to maintain the forms and speak the words of the Kingdom, though their experience of it has entirely ceased; that they still retain their lamps, after their light has gone out; that they continue to call themselves children of the Kingdom, though they have passed out of its holy relationship. In them is fulfilled the statement made concerning Samson, that "the Lord was departed from him," though he wist it not.

The seed that fell on the good soil and remained in it until it brought forth its perfect fruit, represents those who abide in fellowship with God and are therein purified from all their sins and perfected in every grace of the Heavenly Father. One significant statement is made concerning these men that is not made with reference to those who enter the Kingdom but fail of its perfect fruit. And it is this one thing that distinguishes them from other types of Christians. It is the thing that explains their success in escaping all the perils of the Kingdom, by which all

others were overcome. It is, therefore, the one thing needful for all who would, like them, abide in union with God unceasingly and unto eternal life. "They understood the Kingdom." I repeat, this is not said of any except those who through the Kingdom were perfected. *It was their understanding of the Kingdom that protected them from its perils.*

What is meant by this saying: "They understood the Kingdom?" It is a very comprehensive statement, very much more so than we shall be able to reveal. For this understanding of the Kingdom comes only to those who have had growing experience of it. They understand the value of their sonship to God, with its growing relationship to their Heavenly Father, through which they partake of His power, inherit His righteousness, enjoy His peace, feast on His love. They understand it as they experience its transforming, leavening, regenerating power. They understand it as they experience its growth; as they develop day by day into the likeness of their Heavenly Father. They understand it, in its eternal value, as the one perfecting relation-

ship for human souls in all the universe. They understand it, not fully, for they have not fully experienced its power, its joy, its righteousness, its peace, its rest; but they understand it sufficiently to value it so justly as to be protected from yielding to any temptation to sacrifice it for any possible material gain. They understand it as Jesus understood it, when he said: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And, as he again said: It is better for a man that he cut off his right hand, or pluck out his right eye, than that he lose the Kingdom of God.

The one reason that the men represented by the seed which fell by the wayside, the seed on the stony ground, and the seed in the thorny soil, failed to abide in the Kingdom of God, was that they were ignorant of the Kingdom. If they had understood it they would have permitted nothing to prevent them from inheriting it. But they did not enter it with a proper aim or motive. They sought its joys, rather than its righteousness. They represent those who desire fellowship with

God for the joy of such fellowship, and not, first of all, in order that through fellowship they may inherit the perfect character of God. Such men fail to understand the experiences through which one is called to pass in a growing knowledge of God, all of which are necessary for the perfecting of life. One who aims, through fellowship with God, to inherit the righteousness of God will be content even with his adverse experiences in the Kingdom of God. For he will see that all such experiences are essential to the fulfillment of the purpose of the relationship, namely, that he shall be transformed into the likeness of God. The persecutions that arise because of loyalty to the will of God will have a perfecting power upon him. The sacrifices that he has to make in order to develope that fellowship will serve a like purpose. All things that come to a man in connection with his growing experience of God will work together for his highest good. As one thus understands the Kingdom one is protected from all the perils of sacrificing its growth. In Jesus Christ we see this fact

supremely illustrated. As his bosom fellowship with the Father exposed him to suffering and death he understood that such experiences were to be expected as conditions of his perfecting. He understood that to lose the Kingdom of God would be to lose his own soul, but that to remain in it even at the expense of sacrificing everything which would hinder the development of its fellowship, would be to attain to the perfect righteousness of God. Happy is that man who enters into fellowship with God with a clear understanding of what that fellowship must mean to him, in the way of sacrifice of everything that would hinder its development, and who gladly consents to such sacrifice in order that he may inherit its perfecting love and power. Man's relationship with God, consciously and increasingly experienced, with all of its growing fruit, is such an eternal treasure that all one needs in order to maintain himself in that relationship against all the assaults of evil, is to understand it. *In his understanding of the Kingdom of God, man finds his perfect protection from all its perils.*

VI

THE PERIL OF ONE'S PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Matthew 13: 24-30.

CHAPTER VI

THE PERIL OF ONE'S PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

In close connection with the Parable of the Sower Jesus has placed the Parable of the Tares. In his thought, evidently, these parables should be considered together, as their teaching is closely related, one supplementing the other. In the Parable of the Tares a single peril to which the Kingdom of God is exposed is strikingly illustrated and emphasized. It is the peril of spiritual contamination.

The wheat and the tares are growing together in the same field, the tares imperilling the wheat. In this parable we are brought face to face with the question of the possibility of living in union with God while at the same time maintaining close relationship with those who are opposed to that union. Take the case of a Christian woman living in grow-

ing fellowship with a husband who is out of harmony with God. Can they live together in the intimacy of the marriage relationship, the wife maintaining her conscious union with God through obedience to His will, while the husband lives a life of disobedience to that will? Can she continue in the right while he does wrong? Can she fulfill the law of truth while he violates it? Can she increasingly practise the law of love which he constantly contradicts? Can the two walk together when they are not agreed? Will not his unrighteous life choke her righteous life, as tares choke wheat? Or, consider the case of two men in the close and intricate relationship of business partnership, one a child of God, the other without any such relationship to God. Can one persist in obedience to the law of righteousness, the law of truth, the law of love, while the other is disobeying these laws? Or make the field broader and extend the application of the problem to the whole political and social order. Can such a union of the children of God and the children of the world long exist without the children of the world

so affecting the children of the Kingdom as to interrupt their fellowship with their Heavenly Father?

We have said enough to indicate the problem and the peril pointed out by Jesus in the Parable of the Tares, a problem which every child of God has to face, a peril which every child of God has to meet. "Shall we gather up the tares in order to save the wheat?" Is is not necessary that the wheat be separated from the tares? Is not such a separation a condition of salvation? This question has been answered in the affirmative by some who have thought they were interpreting the teaching of Jesus Christ, and multitudes of devout souls have sought to escape the contaminating effect of the world by withdrawing themselves from the world.

But Jesus did not fall into their error. "Let both grow together," he said, "until the harvest." Let no separation be effected on the ground that such separation is necessary in order to preserve and fulfill the possibilities of the wheat. Indeed, he went further, and said that such separation would prove fatal to

the wheat: that it would result in its being pulled up by the roots; that the destruction of the tares, instead of protecting the wheat, would result in the destruction of the wheat, both wheat and tares perishing together. In his judgment, and his judgment was just, because it was the judgment of righteous love, it was absolutely necessary that the wheat and the tares should remain together until the time of harvest. And his judgment has been confirmed in every case when men have sought to sanctify themselves by withdrawing from the world. All such withdrawal on the part of men seeking to perfect their own characters has exposed them to the deadly peril of Pharisaism, a peril infinitely greater than the one which they have sought to escape. The wheat, also, has always been pulled up by the roots when an attempt has been made to pull up the tares that imperilled its growth. Not by separation from association with sinful men has God ever perfected His saints. Not by such separation was the Captain of our salvation made perfect. Companionship with men who are not in union with God need not pre-

vent the Christian's union with Him. Nay it may strengthen it, as one feels more keenly his own need for such union.

There is one condition upon which men who are in union with God may dwell safely with those who are opposed to God's righteousness and love. If the attitude of Christian men toward those who are not Christian is one of positive effort to win them to God, then their presence will serve only to strengthen the Christian's fellowship with God and all the evil results that might otherwise ensue will be overcome. It is never safe for a child of God to be closely associated with men who are living an unspiritual, unrighteous life, except as he has in his soul a permanent purpose to win them from their sins.

VII

THE PERIL OF ARRESTED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

But the wise answered, saying, *Not so;* lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Matthew 25:1-13.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERIL OF ARRESTED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

The parable of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins was given by Jesus to emphasize the peril of an intermittent fellowship with God. Union with Him, to be effective, must be maintained until it has accomplished its perfect purpose. That man is foolish, Jesus declares again and again, who seeks the Kingdom of God without counting the cost of permanently remaining therein. He is like the man who begins to build a tower but does not complete the task. His work is wasted since it fails of completion. There are many things that it were better not to begin if one is not to complete them, since their early and imperfect state can be tolerated only because it is a stage toward their later perfected attainment. Fellowship with God is of infinite

value if it is to be maintained until it has accomplished its eternal purpose, but not otherwise. It does not pay to be a Christian disciple unless one is to continue to be one, forever. Better were it not to have known the way of life than having known it to turn away from it.

The Foolish Virgins were foolish in this, that they did not prepare themselves with sufficient provision of oil to last until the Bridegroom came. They were foolish to suppose that they could please their Master with a half-hearted devotion to his service. Their scant supply of oil indicates their shallow love for him. They wished to gain his favor with as little cost to themselves as possible. They wanted a cheap religion and yet one that should give them a full reward. They were unwilling to put themselves to the expense of devoting themselves fully to the service of their King; and the Bridegroom came when they were not ready to meet him, when their lights were out, because their scant supply of oil was exhausted.

A man may get out of touch with God after

he has had real fellowship with Him. One may dwell in the darkness of the life apart from God after one has enjoyed the light of His presence. It is not true that once in grace means always in grace. It is not safe for the child of God to be out of fellowship with Him. One should be always ready to enter into the larger fellowship when it draws nigh. Very painful was the experience of the unwise Virgins when they discovered that they were not prepared for the fellowship with God which they now knew was within their reach.

Such an experience, I fear, awaits multitudes who bear the name of Christ but who are asleep to the fact of the larger fellowship with him which is reserved in the future for those who prepare themselves for it. Men may get themselves into such an unspiritual state of soul that it will not be possible for them to prepare themselves quickly for communion with God. That fellowship comes only by growth: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It requires the persistent growth in man of love for right-

eousness and truth, through which, only, man has that knowledge of God without which fellowship with him is impossible.

One of the most dangerous delusions that the Church has fostered is that a soul may hereafter be instantly perfected when brought into a perfect world and into the presence of a perfect God. All that such contact would possibly do for an unholy soul would be to give him, not a feast of fellowship, but a frightful vision of his corrupt condition; for the first vision of God does not mean fellowship, but it means painful consciousness of sin. After that there must follow the cleansing of the soul, the enlightening of the conscience, the empowering of the will, all of which require time. The method of growth in the material world is the method of growth in the spiritual world. No exception has ever been made, or ever will be. The time element in growth cannot be ignored. No, the soul cannot be instantly purified of its sins and so prepared for the joys of the perfect life in the perfect world. Jesus warned men of this fact, lest they find themselves at last excluded

from the Feast for which they have failed to prepare themselves.

Evidently the Foolish Virgins had counted upon their ability to obtain the needed preparation to meet the Bridegroom when the moment should come to enter into his presence. That was their fatal mistake, the mistake which multitudes are making today. They supposed that they could then get the oil they needed from their wiser companions; that they could then borrow their way into the fellowship of their King; that they could enter into union with him on the basis of the goodness of others, imputed to them. Evidently they were believers in the theory of imputed righteousness, which has been taught by the Church for centuries, with its withering power upon the lives of those who have most consistently believed it. "Give us of your oil," they said, "for our lamps are gone out." So these men, like the foolish virgins, expect that God will impute other men's virtues to them, and that thus they will be included in their fellowship with Him. They will go in on the borrowed light of another!

They need not pay the price of entrance that Christ paid; someone will give them each a robe for the King's feast.

Notice that these Foolish Virgins were not able to obtain what they needed, in the moment of time which they had when they learned that the Bridegroom was at hand. While they went to buy the Bridegroom came and the door was closed. This was the second disappointment of the Foolish Virgins. Then we notice another mistake of theirs, namely, they expected that somehow the Bridegroom could be induced to share with them the feast for which they were unprepared; as if God could possibly give to an unprepared soul the feast of fellowship with Him. Terrible was the experience of these Virgins when they found that the feast was, indeed, a great reality, but that they were excluded from it because they had failed to qualify themselves for its enjoyment. What if such experience awaits many who have little or no faith in the Kingdom of God! What if an hour should come in which they would know that it is a glorious reality! Like the

Foolish Virgins, millions are asleep to the fact of God's existence and to the fact that fellowship with Him is possible to all men. The hour is coming in which all men will know beyond a doubt that the presence of God is real, and will know that they are about to realize what His attitude toward them is, and will discover whether they are prepared for fellowship with Him, or whether they must of necessity realize their exclusion from Him.

The great majority of men are asleep to the fact of the spiritual life. They are not conscious of the presence of God and therefore are without any fellowship with Him. It will be a frightful experience for such persons to awake to the reality of the spiritual life and find that they have wasted the time that they should have been employing to prepare themselves for its enjoyment; for, as Jesus Christ so remarkably illustrates in this parable, readiness for a larger fellowship can be had only through the preparation of a growing fellowship. One who neglects the earlier stages of such development will find himself of necessity excluded finally from the larger oppor-

tunities. If Heaven is a place of the largest possible fellowship with God, there is no reason to suppose that a man can enter into it except as he has prepared himself for it by gradually developing his experience of fellowship up to the place where he is qualified to enter into it.

Very remarkable is the statement by the Bridegroom of his reason for excluding the Foolish Virgins; "I know you not." As if he had said, "Without acquaintance with me you seek a large fellowship with me, a perfect union with me; without having developed a fellowship with me through its earlier stages you seek abruptly to enter into this fullest experience." Such a result is absolutely impossible. As well might a youth attempt to matriculate in a university when he had neglected all preparatory courses. As well might one seek to enter into the highest fellowship of art when he had not as yet learned its first principles. As well might one attempt to acquire a language, the a-b-c of which he had refused to learn. And yet such men represent multitudes in the Church of Christ today, who

imagine that they are to enter into the perfect fellowship with God at the midnight hour of death, when they have not made the slightest attempt, in this present life, to prepare themselves for that fellowship. It will be a frightful experience for such men when they realize, too late, their unpreparedness! It will be terrible to discover that the splendid feast of the perfected Kingdom of God is a reality, but that they are unprepared to enjoy it. I warn every reader of the peril of unbelief in the Kingdom of God, an unbelief which results in sleeping away the time given by God to prepare for entrance into the Kingdom. Oh, you sleeping Virgins, arise and seek oil for your lamps while it may be found! Seek acquaintance with God and maintain a growing fellowship with Him so that you may be prepared for the perfect fellowship of the future. Refuse to believe those who tell you that fellowship with God is not a growth; that it is a thing that can be received, hereafter, as a direct gift. Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ as he puts you on your guard against this deadly peril to the soul, lest you come at last

to find that the future holds a King's palace with a King's feast, for which you have failed to fit yourself, because you have not believed in its coming. Beware how you sleep away the time given you to develop a fellowship with God that will enable you to enjoy a perfect union with Him hereafter.

VIII

THE PERIL OF A WRONG MOTIVE

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Matthew 20:1-16.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERIL OF A WRONG MOTIVE

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard was related by Jesus in answer to Peter's question as to how much more than others the twelve might expect to receive in return for their labors for Christ. Jesus was pained by this question of his foremost disciple, since it clearly revealed the fact that his motive in serving him was essentially selfish. It was not the motive of the Kingdom of God, the motive that one must act upon in order to enjoy fellowship with his Heavenly Father.

Let me make clear the solemn truth that with such a motive as Peter's no one can possibly have the consciousness of the presence of God, except in rebuke; for such a motive contradicts the only motive on which God acts in all dealings with men. To have fellowship with Him one must act on His motive. Though one give all his goods to feed the poor

and his body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth him nothing so far as the development of fellowship is concerned.

Peter is like the all-day laborer of the parable, who expected to receive more than others from his Lord at the close of the day. He who desires that others receive less than himself will find himself receiving less than the least of those who are willing to share all that they have with others. The least in the Kingdom is greater than the greatest outside the Kingdom. The least thing done in the name of a disciple, in the spirit or motive of Christ, is greater than the greatest thing done in the spirit of selfishness. While the householder offered the same reward, a penny, to all his servants, the all-day laborers received nothing of the fellowship with him which the penny represented. All their labor in the heat and burden of the day brought them no reward, either while they were at work or at the close of the day, because theirs was not a labor of love, either for their master or for those whom they served at his command.

This all-day laborer belongs to the same

class with the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who claimed that his father gave him nothing, though his father said that all that he had had always been at his son's disposal. That is, his father had desired to give him all, and yet had not been able to give him anything, since he had not been able to enter into the least fellowship with him.

Peter did not realize that it was his motive in serving his Master which would determine his reward in his service. He did not understand that Jesus, while desiring to share all with him, could not possibly share anything with him except as the apostle shared his Master's motive. "How much shall we have who have borne the labor and heat of the day? How much more may we expect than they who labor but an hour in the cool of the evening?" In answering this question Jesus shows how great is the contrast between the least service of love and the greatest possible service of selfishness. He purposely uses for example the contrast between the laborer who had worked all day and the man who had worked but an hour, rather than between the

all-day laborer and those who had worked three-quarters, or one-half or one-third of a day. The contrast is like to that which he made between those who cast large sums of money into the treasury and the woman who gave the very smallest possible gift. She, he said, had given more than they all, because she had given at the expense of a sacrifice which indicated a motive of love. She, therefore, received a great reward of fellowship, while those whose gifts were wholly selfish were not permitted to enter into fellowship at all. The same contrast appears again in the story of Simon who entertained the Lord in his palace and the woman who crept in that she might render her Lord the humble service that Simon had denied him.

Jesus knew that Peter, at that moment, was serving him in a spirit which precluded any fellowship between them; he knew that his foremost apostle's motive was such as to render all of his labor valueless and that at the close of the day Peter would be bitterly disappointed in his failure to receive a large and selfish reward from his Master. Jesus fore-

saw that the time was approaching when Peter would be forced by his selfish motive into profane denial of his Master; — that Judas would be led by the same motive to betray him, and that all the others, even those who had enjoyed the longest and closest intimacy with him, would be compelled by the same motive to forsake him utterly. He saw clearly that none of his disciples could possibly drink his cup of fellowship with the Father, since none of them shared with him his Father's Spirit. Our Lord did all in his power to make his disciples see the folly of seeking fellowship with God while they did not share His love for all men.

Contrast the spirit of the all-day laborer, in the parable, with that of his master, and see how impossible it was that these two should have had fellowship with each other. There is a great gulf fixed between them. The spirit of the master is the opposite of the spirit of the servant. One takes no account of motive, while with the other motive is everything. One wishes all of his servants to have all that they need. The other desires for himself that

which others cannot have. He who has labored all the day wants all that he needs for himself, but is not willing that others have all that they need. He desires that others, whose needs are as great as his own, shall have less than they need.

Notice that this parable does not deal with charity, but with justice. In other stories of the Kingdom, like the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus deals with the true nature of charity, but here the justice of love is the theme. There is no charity in giving all that he needs to a man who has done all that he can. Such is the demand of justice. No matter how little a man may do, even though it be no more than the work of a single hour, if he has done all that he has had opportunity or strength to do, he is entitled to a full reward. This is the justice of love, which is the justice of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ. The one-hour men had been idle simply because no man had been willing to hire them. They gladly went to work as soon as they were offered a job. They were not responsible, therefore, for their loss of time. Their just employer paid them for

the time during which they were willing to work. They were rewarded for what they would have done if they had had opportunity. So God deals with all of His children, never deducting from their pay any lost time for the loss of which they are not responsible. He imputes to us all that which we would do if we could. He rewards us according to our motive and not according to our achievements. In His sight the man who has worked all day without love is worthy of no fellowship with Him, while the man who has worked in love but a single hour is entitled to full fellowship. Blessed Spirit of God! Glorious righteousness of love!

But someone will say, "Did not the all-day laborer receive a penny at the close of his day's work? How then do we say that he received no reward?" Our answer is at hand. So far as his master was concerned he was given a full day's pay, but so far as his receiving goes, he received nothing. That is to say, the penny meant nothing to the man who coveted it for himself, but not for others. Let us understand, once for all, that the man who seeks

more for himself than he seeks for others contradicts the very nature of God, and so makes fellowship with Him impossible. The man who is unwilling that others should share to the full all that he craves for himself can never have Christ's experience with God.

But the all-day laborer said, "It is not fair that others, who have done less than we, should have as much. They do not deserve as much. It is not fair to give them so much since they have not earned it." How blind is that man to the justice of God in whose heart the love of God does not dwell! As a matter of fact, as we have seen, the single-hour laborer was entitled to as much as those who had wrought longer, since he had been willing to labor as long as they if he had had their opportunity. They who have the spirit of the all-day laborer can be conscious of the presence of God only in rebuke. Where there is a selfish motive the vision of God's righteousness is impossible, and without vision of His righteousness fellowship with Him is impossible. This explains why we find it so difficult to enjoy the fellowship of the Kingdom

of God. One who in a selfish spirit seeks that fellowship will find himself excluded from it. And how prevalent the spirit of the all-day laborer is, even among those who are foremost among the disciples of Christ! How painfully aware we are of its presence in our own souls! It is the veil of the temple which conceals the inner sanctuary where Jehovah dwells. It is the flesh that must be crucified before one can have Christ's vision of God. God is alive to those only who dwell in His love for all men, a love that craves the highest and best for all, that says to all men, "All that I have I desire to be thine. The penny that I crave for myself I crave for thee also. . . . I crave for those who have not had my opportunities all that I crave for myself. There is no good thing that I desire for myself that I do not desire for all other men." That is what love for all men must say. No man can possibly crave for himself anything that he does not crave for those whom he loves as he loves himself, and no man has the love of God in him who does not love others as he loves himself. The man who says he loves his

brother as he loves himself, and does not desire for his brother all that he desires for himself, deceives his own soul. The love of God is not in him.

How much of the spirit of the all-day laborer there is in us all! How often does it reveal itself in our unjust attitude toward those with whom we are associated! How much we crave that we are not willing that others should have, even those who are as fully entitled to it as we are, to say nothing of those who, like the prodigal son, should be given it as a matter of pure charity. How much more of material comfort we want than we crave for those who share to the full our needs. Like the all-day laborer we feel that we have a right to better homes, better clothes, better food, because we have had larger opportunities to secure them. "What right," we ask, "have the men of one talent to demand the rewards of the men of ten? or the man who labors with his hands to receive the rewards of the man who works with his brain? Let the man who has labored but an hour be content with an hour's pay, though that is utterly in-

sufficient to secure for him the needs of his body and his soul. Let the honest workman, who does what he can, be content to live in a crowded and unsanitary tenement, without the necessities of a son of God. He has no right to the comforts which we claim for ourselves. While we are apparelled in fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day in our palace, let him lie homeless, friendless at the gate, and be content with the crumbs that fall from our table. He has no right to our penny a day, since he has not had our opportunities or our strength wherewith to secure it."

How much of this man's spirit do we have with reference to the higher things of life, even the highest! We are not willing that others should receive, like ourselves, their penny of love, that they should be loved as we are loved. We want our friends to love us more than they do others. Or, while we wish a full measure of the love of God for ourselves we do not covet the same for all men. We do not wish others to receive the same measure with ourselves of joy, not even of spiritual joy. We seem to feel that it will

decrease our joy if others experience the same; that our penny will mean less to us if others have one likewise. We are not willing that others receive, like ourselves, their penny of praise, even though they be quite as fully entitled to it as we are. We cannot bear that they be as highly esteemed as we are. We wish to receive more than we deserve, even though we risk robbing others of their due. We cannot bear to give a full share of credit to others with whom we are laboring in the vineyard of our Lord. In a word, we do not share with Jesus the unselfish love of God, and therefore we do not share with him his fellowship with God. While we have Peter's unconverted spirit, which led him to ask, "What more than others shall we have?" we cannot share our blessed Redeemer's experience of God.

Jesus is the householder of this parable. He craved for every man all that he craved for himself. He desired that God give Himself to all as freely as He had given Himself to him. He prayed that all men might enjoy all that he enjoyed. He craved for every one

the peace that filled his own soul. He sought to share his righteousness to the full with the most impure souls with whom he came in contact. He tasted death for every man. He offered his flesh and blood to the whole world. There was not a selfish desire in his heart, because his soul was filled with the love of God for all men.

Again, I say, we must have his motive if we are to have his experience of God. Everything in us that is not of love is a contradiction of the very nature of God, and must therefore hinder our fellowship with Him.

"Blesed are the pure in heart" (they whose motive is love), "for they shall see God." But what is it to be pure in heart? It is to have nothing in one's heart that contradicts love. That man is not pure in heart who cherishes ill will toward anyone, even toward those who bear ill will toward him. If we would have Christ's fellowship with God our love, like Christ's, must go forth toward those who do not love us.

IX

THE PERIL OF AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matthew 18: 21-35.

CHAPTER IX

THE PERIL OF AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant Jesus illustrates the fact that without the forgiving spirit man cannot possibly long maintain fellowship with God. We have here, again, to be reminded that God's attitude toward us must, also, be our attitude toward each other. Oh, that we might understand this! Would that we might experience this truth which Jesus so wonderfully illustrates in the parable which we are considering, a truth which he enjoins upon every one of his followers, that our fellowship with a perfect God can only be maintained when we forgive one another as He forgives us our debts and trespasses against Him,—the things in us that contradict His perfect nature, and that would estrange us from Him if He did not pardon them. How much there is in us of unright-

eousness, that contradicts His righteousness; of falsehood, that contradicts His truth; of hate, that contradicts His love. How God suffers in His relation of close union with sinful man!

"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Peter asked. Peter was always asking such questions of Jesus. He it was who asked how much more than other men he might expect to receive for his service in the Kingdom of his Master. In his answers to both of these questions Jesus reminds Peter of the example of God in His dealings with men, and bids him follow that. With regard to the forgiving spirit, Jesus told Peter that he must forgive as God forgives, that is, as often as anyone might sin against him and repent. It is only as we thus forgive men their trespasses against us, that we are able to keep in fellowship with them. Without the forgiving spirit, husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend would soon be permanently separated, with no possibility of reconciliation. It is clear enough that the only possibility of

maintaining any personal friendship is by the exercise of the forgiving spirit. And such forgiveness must be from the heart, removing all estrangement. So God pardons us, and so He requires us to pardon others; for if we do not thus forgive men, God, also, will not forgive us.

But if God does not forgive us we shall not be able to keep in union with Him for a day, nay, not for a single hour. Our only hope of abiding in union with God is in His readiness to pardon all of our offenses, no matter how often committed, so long as we repent of them. And He is as quick with His pardon as we are with our penitence. He always runs to meet the sincerely repentant soul, for He suffers more than we do when His fellowship with us is interrupted.

Peter had never considered how much there was in him that contradicted the nature of his Heavenly Father. The figure, "ten thousand talents," that represents what God has to forgive in man, is set over against the insignificant figure of "fifty pence," representing what man has to forgive in his brothers. This tre-

mendous difference strikingly illustrates the fact that there is infinitely more in us that contradicts the righteousness of God, than there is in men that contradicts our righteousness. If, therefore, God can love us, it is possible for us to love one another. If He can forgive all our sins, we can forgive men all of their sins. For God has to forgive a thousand times more in us than we have to forgive in those with whom we are associated. When, therefore, we withhold our fellowship from men, because of their offences against us, of which they are repentant, God withholds His fellowship from us, because of our sins against Him, of which we are repentant.

Further than this, we are not to refuse to fellowship with any man without letting him know the reason. This is the teaching of Jesus, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:" then if he repents, we are to forgive him. Or, if we realize that any man has something against us, we must try to discover what it is, in order that our offence or misunderstanding may be removed, and so our

fellowship with him be maintained. That is, we are to make every possible effort to enter into fellowship with all men, and to protect that fellowship from everything that would mar it. This is precisely what God does as He seeks to reveal that in us which prevents us from entering into fellowship with Him, and from remaining therein. He does not leave us in ignorance of the causes of our estrangement from Him, but puts Himself to infinite expense to reveal our faults that they may be removed. By so doing He proves the genuineness of His desire for fellowship with us. He prizes the union so highly as to seek, by all means, to protect and promote it, through the removal of all that would prevent or mar it.

And we must imitate Him in this respect in all our dealings with those with whom we are associated. So far as lies in our power we must live in the harmonious relations of love with all men. At the door of every heart we must knock, seeking such union with man as God seeks with us. There must be no barrier in us to fellowship with any man, if there

is to be in us no barrier to fellowship with God. Oh, there are so many who do not see that their failure to practise the forgiving love of God in all their life relationships with men is the reason why all their efforts to realize the presence of God in fellowship utterly fail! If, after having been forgiven by God for all those offences that prevent our fellowship with Him, we refuse to forgive men all that hinders our fellowship with them, we shall find ourselves experiencing such an estrangement from God and such condemnation by Him as the wicked servant of the parable experienced.

X

THE PERIL OF THE USELESS AND SELFISH LIFE

And he said, A certain man had two sons:

And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me.* And he divided unto them *his* living.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it;* and let us eat, and be merry:

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Luke 15: 11-32.

CHAPTER X

THE PERIL OF THE USELESS AND SELFISH LIFE

PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP, THE LOST COIN AND THE LOST SON

The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son are parables that should be considered in close connection, since they represent different phases of the same subject. He who is outside of the Kingdom of God is like a sheep without a shepherd. Such a sheep is exposed to perils to which it is blind and is therefore in danger of being destroyed. No man's conscience can give him guidance except as it is enlightened by the spirit of God. Wolves prey upon the sheep that are not cared for by the Good Shepherd. Men are overcome and destroyed by perils to which they are blind unless they are enlightened through their spiritual fellowship with the All-seeing God. Jesus, realizing this, sought in all his ministry on earth to share with men

his spiritual fellowship with the Heavenly Father. It was his greatest joy to do this, knowing that through such fellowship only could men be protected from their perils and developed in their virtues. Jesus has no other way of salvation for any man.

The parable of the lost coin represents in a very striking way a man who has lost his value because he is of no service to his brothers. The coin in its "down and out" condition is valueless since it is rendering no service. The value of a man is wholly in the service he renders to the world. If the salt have lost its savour it is henceforth good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men, i. e., that which is not fit for service is, so long as it remains in that state, valueless. Intrinsically valuable as the material of the silver piece was, it was practically valueless so long as it remained out of circulation, hidden in the dust. Jesus illustrates the same truth in the parable of the fruitless tree, concerning which he says: "Enrich the ground and dig about it, and if possible make it fruitful, but in case such efforts fail, cut it down and give it to the

fire: why should it encumber the ground?" That is to say, make it serviceable in the highest degree possible. If it cannot be serviceable in fruit bearing, then let it be serviceable as a heat producer; for its only value is the value of the service it renders, and its worth must be estimated solely by that standard.

After he had fed the thousands, we are told in the miracle story, Jesus commanded that the fragments be gathered up, that nothing be lost. To be lost, as Jesus uses the term, is to be rendering no valuable service to the world. One who is in that condition is dead to God, or, if you please, God is dead to him, so long as he is dead to his opportunities for service. That man who is dead to his brother is also dead to God, "dead in trespasses and sin," the Scripture says. They that live in selfishness are dead all their lives. God is not a reality to a man who is not fulfilling the law of service. The woman sought her lost coin. So God is always seeking men who have lost their value to those with whom they are related. Out of fellowship with these they are out of fellowship with God; separated from

them they are separated from him. The woman seeking the piece of silver represents the eternal attitude of God, who is continually seeking to restore men to a life of service.

The parable of the Prodigal Son, which closely follows the parable of the lost coin, illustrates the difficulty that God experiences in entering into fellowship with all of his children. What draws one class of men to Him is the very thing that repels another class from Him. The father's treatment of the prodigal, which drew him away from a life of sin into filial fellowship, embittered the elder son's heart against both his father and his brother, so that when one son came to the feast of fellowship which the father had prepared for both of his sons, the other withdrew from it. The elder brother wanted fellowship with his father but not with his brother. He was angry when told that he could not feast with his father except in company with his brother. He was deaf to the entreaties of his father to unite in fellowship with him, because of the presence of the brother. The father craved a fellowship which should unite him with both

of his sons, but, alas, the one son did not desire fellowship with the other, though each wished union with the father. How sad this experience of the father who could not enjoy fellowship with his sons because of their refusal to fellowship each other! That is the experience that God has today, as he seeks union with all classes of men, while they hold themselves apart from each other. The rich man would enjoy his fellowship with God while his heart is dead to fellowship with his poor brother. The Pharisee seeks to commune with God while he refuses to speak to a brother who is also a son of God.

"Thou never gavest me a kid," the elder brother said, "with which to be merry, but thou hast given him the fatted calf." The contrast is between the richest possible fellowship and no fellowship at all. The least is here placed over against the greatest. We see the same contrast in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which God gives the fellowship of Abraham's bosom to Lazarus but denies as much fellowship to the rich man as is represented by a drop of water. And in both cases

the lesson is the same, namely, that one who will not enter into fellowship with God in company with others who enjoy that fellowship will find himself wholly excluded. He who seeks fellowship with God but does not seek it with men will seek in vain. He who knocks at the door of the Kingdom of God with a selfish spirit will find himself knocking at a closed door. Any man who seeks fellowship with God solely on his own behalf, without any disposition to crave it for others, will crave in vain. God will not give even a kid for the feast of fellowship with a man who is unwilling to share that fellowship with his brother; God will not give a drop of fellowship to a man dying of thirst so long as that man wishes it for himself only. So when the father said to the son, with whom he was out of fellowship: "All that I have is thine," he meant to imply, "if thou art willing to share it with thy brother. I offer you all that I have prepared for him, the fatted calf, the music, the dancing, upon the condition that you share it with him, but I cannot give you anything from which he is excluded."

God help us to see the great truth here set forth; a truth that seems never to have dawned upon the Christian world, in which great bodies of Christians seek for themselves an exclusive communion with God. They have never communed with God. Many would rather have a kid apart from others than the fatted calf shared with others. The father had freely offered the elder brother all that he had prepared for his younger son, and yet the elder brother declared that his father had not given him as much as a kid with which to make merry. The simple truth is that what this elder brother wanted was something from which his younger brother should be excluded. Rather than share the best that his father had with his younger brother he would be content to have the very meanest that his father could give, so long as he could have it with his father apart from his brother.

So, God offers all that he has to all of his children, upon the condition that they share it with one another, as he is willing to share it with them all. All that he has he freely offers to all of his children. He will not give to one

that which he withholds from others. His spirit of love makes it impossible that he should have fellowship with anyone who wishes for himself that which he does not desire for others. The very nature of God is evermore in contradiction with the spirit of selfishness, wherever it is found. Not a kid for the man who seeks fellowship with him which he is not willing to share with his brother, but a calf for him who seeks fellowship with him which he is willing to share with all others. We shall never have Christ's fellowship with God until we seek Christ's fellowship with men, with all men.

XI

THE PERIL OF THE LACK OF HUMAN FELLOWSHIP

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Luke 16:1-9.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Luke 16:19-31.

CHAPTER XI

THE PERIL OF THE LACK OF HUMAN FELLOWSHIP

THE PARABLES OF THE UNJUST STEWARD, AND DIVES AND LAZARUS

The parable of the Unjust Steward is closely related to the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Both are parables of the Kingdom of God, although they are not so called by our Lord. The parable of the Unjust Steward illustrates the fact that men who are to enter into fellowship with God after death must begin that fellowship in this life. The steward had received notice that his stewardship was soon to terminate. Like him, we all understand that the life we are now living is soon to end. He was wise in preparing himself for the life that he desired to enter into after his stewardship was over. "What shall I do," he asked, "when I am no longer steward?" "Thou fool," is the word of Christ for the man who does not consider that there is a life beyond

the grave, the nature of which he is to determine by the life he lives here. "If," the steward says, "I am to escape a friendless life after my stewardship ends, I must make friends now, who shall receive me then. If I am to enter into friendships there, they must begin here."

Death is a harvest when we shall reap what we have sown and nothing more. I do not say that we shall have no opportunity for sowing after this life is over that shall bring a harvest later, but we shall not find prepared for us after death what we have not developed in this life. Jesus is always illustrating and emphasizing this fact, which none of his disciples, in the days of his flesh, seemed to understand and to which most of his disciples now are utterly blind. At another time he tells the story of the foolish rich man who laid up much goods for his pleasure in this life, while he laid up nothing for his pleasure after death; who was wise for a moment, but foolish for eternity. He represents men who toil thirty, forty, fifty years to accumulate the means to enjoy the things of this world for a brief sea-

son, but make no preparation for the eternal fellowship of the everlasting ages. In this respect the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.

But the steward, in this parable, was wiser in sowing what he wanted to reap. He had no idea that he could expect to enter into a life for which he had not prepared himself. So Jesus wishes us to understand that if heaven is to be a place of friendship it can only be because we create such friendship in this life and, so to speak, lay it up in heaven before we go there. The steward was wise in the method he used to secure the future he desired. He understood that only in one way could he possibly secure that future. "I cannot dig," he said, by which he meant, "I cannot possibly work my way into what I desire." "And to beg I am ashamed," that is to say, "I do not desire, after my life of stewardship is over, to be dependent upon charity, to have a future in which I shall be a pauper, a recipient and not a giver, in which I shall reap what I have not sown, in which I shall have whatever pleasure there may be in a selfish life.

Even if, in that life beyond, I should be able to beg what I desire, my life would be one of shame. If I should be permitted to receive after having failed to give, whatever I might receive would bring no joy, no glory, but shame."

These words of Christ have a deeper meaning than we have ever imagined. They should be very earnestly considered by all who are expecting to borrow their way into heaven, or to find there a life in which they will be ministered to, notwithstanding the fact that they have developed no spirit of ministering. Such a life could never prove a joy. It could no more prove a joy there than it can prove a joy here. The man who begged in heaven, even though he should be successful in begging all that it is and has, would find that he had received nothing but shame after all. What shall I do to secure a future that shall be full of joy and peace? Since I cannot hope to beg it I must do something to earn it. The writer is of opinion that a great majority of those who are anticipating a satisfactory life in heaven are expecting to get it for nothing,

are expecting to reap it without sowing it, are hoping to receive it as a friendly gift, independent of anything they may have done to merit it. They are to be eternal paupers, spiritual parasites, always being ministered to, notwithstanding their failure to minister. The steward of this parable was infinitely wise in realizing that even if he could beg what he needed, his life as a pauper would be one of shame and pain instead of honor and joy. He was wiser than the foolish virgins who thought they could beg their way into the feast of fellowship, for which they had refused to put themselves to the cost of preparing. He understood that a life in which he was served without serving could never be a life of fellowship.

"I am resolved what to do to secure the future I crave," he said, "the friendships upon which I shall be dependent for escape from a life of loneliness and pain, I must make now. I know exactly what I must do in order to secure the desired result." What did he do? He called one of his lord's debtors who owed a hundred measures of oil and commanded

him to sit down quickly and write fifty. He reduced this man's burden one half. Then he called another who owed one hundred measures of wheat and told him to write it four score, reducing his burden twenty per cent. In other words, he endeared himself to men by sharing their burdens. He entered into friendships with them by the service he rendered them, and when his stewardship was over these men, whom he had served while it lasted, gladly welcomed him and so made for him a desirable life. We must do precisely what he did if we would secure the future we desire after this life is over. "Go thou and do likewise," is the word of Christ to every man who would enter into eternal life.

Make friends on earth, whose friendship you shall enjoy increasingly here, and finally, perfectly, in heaven. While you have the opportunities of this world, through ministering to men's necessities enter into a fellowship which beginning here shall be perfected hereafter. As the wise steward lightened the burdens of those with whom he was associated, so we are to lighten the burdens of those with

whom we are associated. Christ said, "Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure heaped up and running over."

Moreover, if there are friendships made with men, they will include fellowship with God, for where there are two united on earth He is also included. Fellowship with men, on the basis of a true service to them, inevitably involves fellowship with God. We must begin such fellowship with both God and men here, if we are to find it in a larger degree in the life beyond the grave.

Very strikingly Jesus follows this parable with the parable of Dives and Lazarus. The rich man, in this parable, dies without having laid up any fellowship in heaven. He goes to the life beyond the grave not having done what the wise steward did. He asks to reap there what he has refused to sow here. He begs there from another to whom he had denied service here. Dives sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. He beholds the wretched beggar, whom he had refused to fellowship, even with a look, or a crumb of bread, enjoying the most intimate fellowship with Abra-

ham, from which he, the rich man, is wholly excluded. What Jesus wished to show by the parable of this rich man was that Dives was not associated with Abraham in his experience with God. Dives did not know that his selfish attitude of separation from Lazarus fixed a gulf between him and God; that the gulf between him and Lazarus, his suffering brother, was exactly the gulf that separated him from God, that he was as far from God as he was from Lazarus. Dives had no idea that the measure of distance between him and Lazarus exactly measured the distance between him and God.

No doubt Dives attended church and made long prayers in public places, as a sign of his profession of close union with God, while he passed by the poor, friendless man, lying at his gate, without the slightest recognition of him or purpose to minister to his needs. There was a great gulf fixed between Dives and Lazarus and that gulf was exactly the same as the gulf between Dives and God. One can hardly imagine a greater gulf between two persons than that gulf which existed between

Dives, "who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day," and that beggar who lay at his gate asking a crumb of bread. The striking fact, that seems to have been overlooked by all interpreters of this parable, is that this social gulf between these two men exactly indicated the separation between the rich man and God.

Oh, if someone had only told Dives this in the days when he was blindly going on his way to hell,—to the hell that must at last be the experience of every man who lives increasingly the selfish life! Oh, that all men now could be made to see that their lack of love for men measures their lack of love for God, that they are as far from God as they are from their brothers, that they can draw near to Him only as they draw near to men, and that if there is a gulf fixed between them and the poorest and meanest man for whom they are responsible, that gulf is also between them and God!

There came a time when the rich man saw Lazarus in the place that he had supposed belonged entirely to him. He saw Lazarus

enjoying a fellowship from which he was himself excluded, but which he had anticipated for himself. Then he said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may minister unto me, that he may dip his finger into water and cool my parched tongue." His words indicate the unchanged character of his selfish spirit. Death has made no difference in him. He asks now to be ministered to, as he had been ministered to before he died. He offers no service, but asks to be served. Dives says, "Send Lazarus to serve me!" and Abraham replies, "Son, the thing that you ask is impossible: the gulf between you and Lazarus renders it so. You cannot reap from him what you did not sow in him when you had the greatest possible opportunity to do so. You ask me to command him to serve you, notwithstanding the fact of your absolute refusal to serve him while you had opportunity. Son, remember some things that you seem to have forgotten, some things that prevent the granting of your request, things that you evidently do not see as a barrier to fellowship. Remember that in your

lifetime you were in a position and condition to relieve distress that was such as to excite the pity of the dumb dogs. Now, with that same selfish spirit unchanged, you ask to reap the joys of the unselfish life. With the same gulf which you have created still existing between you and your brother, you ask that you may have the intimate fellowship he enjoys with me. The thing is impossible. I cannot send Lazarus to ease your pain. It is not in his power to give you the joys of the unselfish spirit while you are still the embodiment of the selfish spirit. He cannot go to you with even so much of fellowship as is represented by a drop of water, for that fellowship is inseparably connected with a spirit of service which you do not possess. The joys of the unselfish life, can they in any degree be ministered to a man who has the selfish spirit? Can one who will not minister be ministered to, in the things of the spirit of God? Can a man have the fellowship of joy with a man from whom he is separated by a gulf of selfish spirit? Can heaven be given to a man who has not the unselfish spirit? Can a man

enjoy that for which he is not fitted, for which he has no capacity, for which he has developed no fellowship? Can a man who craves only to be ministered unto know anything of the joys of one whose greatest delight is in imparting joy to others?"

Jesus has given us in this parable the most striking illustration of the impossibility of an unselfish man's sharing hereafter the fellowship of God, when he has not shared with men here the joys of an unselfish life. Here is one of the eternal "cannots" of Jesus Christ, which all men should understand, but of which most men are unconscious. It is a question now whether my readers will see it, even while it is before their eyes, and understand it, even though it is illustrated, again and again, in this book. Let me repeat it. The gulf for which Dives was responsible, that separated Dives and Lazarus, exactly measured the distance between Dives and God. All the attempts that this rich man made to enter into fellowship with his heavenly Father, while he was neglecting to minister to the needs of his brother, were absolutely fruitless. No one can

possibly have fellowship with God except as he enters into it by sharing the spirit of God, which is supremely unselfish. Selfishness in man contradicts the very nature of God and makes fellowship with Him impossible. All of a man's belief in religious dogma and practice of religious forms will not give him the least crumb of fellowship with God, so long as he remains in bondage to the selfish spirit. A man who would permit a brother to lie in his friendlessness and sickness and poverty unministered to, at his gate, could not possibly have any fellowship with God by means of anything he might do in the mere observance of forms or rites of religion.

It is very striking that the gulf between Dives and Lazarus before death was exactly the same after death. Death did not fill it up, or bridge it over. Death did not close that social chasm. These men were as far apart in the life beyond the grave as they were in the life this side the vale, and the gulf that separated them there was the same as that which divided them here.

The rich man made the same mistake that

the foolish virgins made who thought that they could steal, or beg their way, into a fellowship after death for which they were unprepared before death. Dives represents all those who expect a life after death in which they shall be ministered to without ministering, a life of freedom from toil, a life in which they shall be served without serving, a life whose joy shall be the joy of selfishness. That seems to be the conception of heaven that is held by many who name the name of Christ and who are familiar with his continual rebuke of such a conception.

"Heaven! Why, that is where we shall be ministered to; where we shall be served without serving." It seems to me that such is the conception which most Christians have of heaven. They think they will find there the joy of idleness, they will have everything done for them; heaven will be a place where there will be no toil, no more need to earn anything, where everything will be done for them, where every Lazarus will be commanded to serve them. The whole world seems to be filled with Dives' conception of heaven, notwithstanding

the fact that it is the very contradiction of the conception held before us by the Son of God. A frightful awakening is in store for all who hold Dives' idea of the life beyond the grave. Their conception of heaven is Christ's conception of hell. What the rich man expected would be an experience of joy proved to be an experience of pain. I repeat that this man's conception of heaven was after all nothing but a true conception of hell; that, instead of proving a place of pleasure, it proved a place of torment, for one cannot possibly imagine a darker and deeper hell than a world in which one should desire to be served by everybody without desiring to serve anybody.

The only joy there is in this life is the joy of being of service through love. To be served, even by those whom we love most, without serving, is not pleasure, but pain. To be without the consciousness that we are needed by others is misery. To have Lazarus serve us while we withhold service from him—that can never be heaven. Abraham is righteously represented in this parable as refusing to encourage, by so much as a drop of water, the selfish

spirit of Dives, which had already so fully developed as to create for him a hell of torment.

The parable closes without giving us any light as to the eternal future of Dives. It leaves him unchanged in his selfish spirit. Even his prayer that his brothers be warned lest they come, also, to this place of torture indicates a love for them which is largely selfishness. Jesus solemnly warns us that the love that prepares a soul for fellowship with God is a love that goes far beyond one's near relatives: that it is a love that includes the least of God's children, that does not pass by the man "down and out," at the gate. No man can have Christ's fellowship with God except as he has Christ's love for men. That man who shuts the meanest man out of his heart in that measure closes the door of the Kingdom of God.

XII

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

These are the perils of the Kingdom of God —perils involving interruption of fellowship with Him, with loss of all that His Kingdom means of righteousness, love, peace and joy, here and hereafter.

Jesus Christ escaped all these perils of the Kingdom through his supreme consecration of himself to obedience to God. He watched for their approach, and prayed for grace and strength with which to overcome them. He was never deceived by them, but always recognized and escaped them, even when they came from his favorite apostle, Peter, and from his beloved mother. These, not knowing the will of God concerning him, would have unwittingly misled him, if he had not been on his guard, when they tempted him. Only as we watch and pray, as he watched and prayed, shall we maintain our fellowship with God, through seeing and overcoming the

temptations which will pursue us in many forms, so long as life lasts.

Such is a very imperfect presentation of the Kingdom of God. It is a very simple Gospel, and may be understood by the wayfaring man. Jesus did not suppose that his Gospel required a trained mind to apprehend or teach it. Rather it was good tidings which could be told to fishermen, and to others in the common walks of life, and which they, understanding it, could easily tell again to others. But experience proved that natural and simple and clear as it is, and as he, himself, told it, those who heard him strangely misunderstood its meaning. To many it simply meant a new social order, in which material things would be possessed more easily and abundantly. As they interpreted it, it was meat and drink, and not spiritual riches. So numerous were the misconceptions that immediately sprang up whenever Christ told the story of the Kingdom, that it was almost impossible for him to induce anyone even to gain a glimpse of its spiritual significance.

The Christian world is still full of miscon-

ceptions of the nature of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom has come to be represented as a social democracy, or something very different from the personal relationship with God which Jesus taught. His religion has become so theological and ecclesiastical and philosophical as to require a trained mind to understand it. It has been so perverted that it no longer bears its legitimate fruit in men's lives. Therefore it comes as a surprise, even to the Church for the most part, when the Kingdom of Christ is declared to be a relationship of two, God and man. The very existence of such a relationship is questioned by many members of the Church of Christ. Some imagine that the Kingdom is the Church, and one church holds that it is that Church, and no other. The simple truth is, that wherever two are met together—God and man—whether in a hovel or in a palace, whether in a church or in the market-place, wherever these two are in personal union, there the Kingdom of God is, and there its fruit will appear. A glance at the state of the world and of the Church indicates the crying necessity for the

recovery of this largely lost Gospel. Multitudes are in weakness, darkness, sorrow, sin, simply because they are not in the Kingdom of God. They are sheep without a shepherd to lead them into the pastures where their needs may be supplied. One's heart aches for them as one considers how near to them help is, if they could but be enabled to see it. Drunkenness, and crime of every type is increasing on every hand, because the Kingdom of God is not clearly preached. The one hope for the world is in its coming; the coming of the Kingdom for which Jesus Christ taught his disciples to pray, in that one prayer which he gave for universal use.

The writer has experienced in a measure in the religion of Jesus Christ all that he teaches in this book. He has seen it deliver men from the power of drink and every other bondage, after everything else had failed. He is in daily contact with Protestants, Catholics and Jews, many of whom marvel at the good news of their sonship to God, qualifying them for fellowship with Him. Recently a man who had spent years behind prison bars said, "I

might have escaped that painful experience if I had known of this kind of religion when I was tempted to enter upon a life of crime."

At this point, as we pause to consider what we have written, we are tempted to re-write the entire book; for there is much of it which we now see even more clearly, and there is much in the Bible concerning Christ's experience of God that we have omitted; but our life is so taken up with pressing opportunities for reducing the religion of Christ to practice on behalf of suffering and perishing humanity that we have little more time to write about it. Under the circumstances we must be content with a brief recapitulation of the subject as it now lies in our mind. After all it will not be difficult to put the whole in a nut-shell, to give the gist of all that can be told of Christ's experience of God.

We are confirmed in our faith that such an experience of God as Jesus claimed for himself is a reality. It, alone, explains the character of Jesus. Union with a perfect God perfected him. Jesus did indeed inherit from his people much of his righteousness, but he

also inherited from them all their prejudices and sinful tendencies. Heredity made no exception in his case. It did not hand down to him the good only. He was made in all respects like unto other men. His appetites and passions were as real and as tense as ours. They imperilled him as they imperil us. He was encompassed with all of our infirmities of thought, speech and conduct. In the face of the evil tendencies of his nature and environment he felt powerless in himself to achieve a righteous character. "Of myself I can do nothing," he said.

He declared his dependence upon God in his struggles for perfection. He confessed that he had put all of himself into the effort to overcome sin, and he would have been defeated but for the help which came to him from his daily experience of God. In the wilderness of his temptation and in the garden of his great trial he had to be strengthened from without.

Jesus aimed at perfection with a perfect motive and through fellowship with a perfect God. He knew that only through a growing

experience of God could he hope to attain the righteousness of God. There was no doubt in the mind of Christ on this point,—none. Through the Kingdom of God to the perfection of God; that was the experience of the only man of our race who has sought and won a perfect character. Let me give all possible emphasis to this fact. Jesus sought union with God, not merely for the joy of such a union, but first of all for its righteousness, knowing that if through it he experienced the righteousness of God, all other attributes of God would be added to him. His single life aim was to perfect himself as his Father in Heaven is perfect; to fulfill all the righteousness of God. His motive was without flaw, since he sought for all men the perfection which he sought for himself. Without such a motive his aim would have been unattainable. Fellowship with God, the perfect God, was the method by which Jesus sought to attain his aim. He realized that without such fellowship he could not possibly hope to secure the development and fulfillment of the divine possibilities of his nature. Therefore Jesus regarded

his fellowship with God as the supreme treasure. The Kingdom of God to him was so valuable that he would gladly give all that he had to possess it. Without it there was no possibility of perfecting his soul. Without union with God he would be as a seed without soil, or as meal without leaven, or as a branch without a vine. His soul would be lost to all possibility of perfection unless he kept himself in growing experience of God. Knowing this, we understand why Jesus was prepared to maintain his union with God at any cost; why he sacrificed all that he had, every other friendship, and finally his life on the cross, rather than contradict the nature of God, and so mar his fellowship with Him, his experience of Him.

St. Paul shared Christ's estimate of the value of an experience of God when he declared that he regarded all that such an experience had cost him as so much refuse in the streets compared with it. It was Jesus' understanding that only as he kept himself in the Kingdom of God could he expect to inherit the righteousness of God, that made him prize

that Kingdom so highly as to protect him fully from all the temptations that came to him to sacrifice it for material gain or social relationships. His experience of God was so precious to Christ that he gladly sacrificed all that would have hindered it.

That relationship is open to all men upon the same condition that marked Christ's entrance into it. If there is a man who cannot have Christ's experience of God, then there is a man who cannot hope to attain with Christ to the perfection of God. But thanks be unto God, there is no man of our race who may not ultimately be perfected, since there is none who may not share to the full Christ's experience of God. That experience at first may be very feeble. The union with God of some men may be like that of a mother and a new born child, or like the union of one of the least of seeds with the soil and sun, but it will grow if it is cultivated, until it perfects the humblest man remaining in it.

The religious experience of Jesus Christ is a reality, as everyone may know who will fulfill the conditions of experiencing it. Through

obedience to God's laws, which are all expressions of Himself, men experience and know Him in the only way in which he can be known. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten of the Father, he hath declared Him." That is, Jesus declared One whom he had not seen, to men who can never see Him. The writer of these words connects them with a statement of the secret of Christ's knowledge of God, when he says, "He was in the bosom of the Father," by which he means that Jesus' revelation of God is solely the result of his experience of God. He that is in the bosom of the Father, because of that close experience of the Father, has power to reveal Him in *his character, which is the result, or fruit, of that union.* Only as we have Christ's experience of God, his bosom experience of God, can we know Him as he knew Him, and declare Him to the world as he declared Him.

Reader, are you in the Kingdom? Do you have daily experience of its fruits? Or, are you in the outer darkness of the life apart from God, with its perils, sorrows, evils, er-

rors, sins, leading to death? If so, let me plead with you to consider the value of what God offers you in His Kingdom, which, at this moment, as you read these words, is within your reach, and into which you may now enter, at this moment, through the door of loving consent to do the perfecting will of your Heavenly Father. Come into it and see for yourself its treasures, taste its fruits and feel its power. Come into the life with God, in which your burden will grow light. It is an easy yoke,—the yoke that unites one with Him, who is all love, and truth, and joy. Fulfilling the command of Jesus, which is written, also, in my own heart, I say, "Come, for all things are ready—and whosoever will, let him come, and partake of the water of life freely."

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